

Deputation to Council – Friends of Woodhouse Moor

Date: 2 May 2023

Report of: Chief Officer of Highways and Transportation

Report to: Director of City Development

Will the decision be open for call in? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Brief summary

The purpose of this report is to provide a response to the deputation submitted to Full Council by the Chair of Friends of Woodhouse Moor, Mr Bill McKinnon on the 22nd March 2023. On this occasion, the Chair was joined by two concerned local residents; Claire Randall and Sue Thomas.

The A660 project team has a history of engagement with the Chair of Friends of Woodhouse Moor, who has raised several concerns which this report addresses. The A660 consultation served to gather feedback, concerns and suggestions from stakeholders, affected businesses and the public. All feedback received has been considered equally.

Recommendations

The Director of City Development is recommended to:

- a) Approve the response to the deputation submitted to Full Council by the Chair of Friends of Woodhouse Moor, Mr Bill McKinnon on the 22nd March 2023.

What is this report about?

1. The A660 proposals are funded by Active Travel England's Active Travel Fund. The proposals will increase travel options and improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists along the A660.
2. Leeds City Council's Connecting Leeds team facilitates Highways and Transportation consultations, communications and engagement with stakeholder groups across a range of backgrounds to ensure that Highways and Transportation schemes reflect the needs of Leeds' citizens as much as possible.
3. A five-week consultation exercise on the A660 proposals took place from Monday 30th January to Sunday 5th March 2023. The consultation was primarily hosted online via Commonplace and was supplemented by 4 community events and community outreach, performed by Leeds Involving People. Stakeholders were also engaged separately throughout.

This consultation resulted in significant feedback from interested parties, largely supportive of the proposals (63.3% positive sentiment, 25.7% negative sentiment, 11.1% neutral sentiment).

4. 72% of respondents said they would like the scheme to be made permanent or made permanent with some changes. Whenever feasible, the feedback from the trial has been incorporated into the designs for a permanent scheme.
5. The Chair of Friends of Woodhouse Moor has, in this deputation, raised concerns covering several themes:
 - Commonplace's 'selection bias' and Data Protection policy
 - the content of the consultation
 - the high response rate
 - the safety of cycle lanes
 - the significance of alcohol as a factor in casualties
 - the loss of green spaces, trees and grass verge

This report addresses these concerns.

In regard to Commonplace, 'selection bias' and data protection:

6. Commonplace is a neutral, independent platform; a host for content. The content of the consultation is developed by Leeds City Council's in-house Highways and Transportation Communications team.
7. Commonplace is the data controller of information used to administer the platform (for example, user accounts and passwords). They act as a data processor for personal data that 'Initiators' (i.e. the Council) collect using the platform. LCC is, therefore, the data controller of any consultation responses (and could retrieve copies of these even in the event of the contract expiring). Further information in respect of this matter is contained within Commonplace's [privacy policy](#).

Commonplace is responsible for the administration of these user accounts, and anyone who creates an account with Commonplace is provided with appropriate privacy information at this point. Commonplace is therefore, fully compliant with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.

8. The Chair of Friends of Woodhouse Moor has raised a concern that Commonplace 'has won awards for their high response rate here. They attribute this to repeatedly consulting the same people.' Mr McKinnon states that this is 'selection bias'. The project team understand this concern, that Commonplace only repeatedly consults the same people, originates from an interview: [Festival of place - Winners and shortlisted projects from The Pineapple awards - Connecting Leeds Covid Response, Leeds - Leeds City Council with Commonplace](#). The interview states that the project at the time: 'provide(d) a mobilised community base of almost 30,000 people that feel empowered, connected, and driven to have their say on issues in their area... they can re-engage this community to ensure the longevity and impact of future transport developments.'

This statement does not suggest that Connecting Leeds is limiting or has since limited its outreach to those 30,000, merely that the engagement on that project at the time was a useful step in engaging 30,000 people who may or may not wish to engage again in the future. The A660 consultation was not limited to those people. Whilst Commonplace may have a large number of dedicated people who take part in consultations, this does not mean that consultations are restricted to these individuals – the consultation was open to

everybody. However, to ensure local relevancy, we collected the first line of the postcode via Commonplace and, at our events, we asked all visitors to sign in and provide their first line of postcode.

9. Finally, the same 'selection bias' accusation also concerns 'eight meetings with cyclists before the 2018 A660 cycle lane consultation'. For clarity, this was the initial consultation which resulted in the trial scheme, which the 2023 scheme seeks to make permanent.

Leeds City Council has a regular cycle forum meeting, open to anyone, to keep cycling groups and interested individuals up to date with all schemes being progressed across the city. Their feedback is invaluable in developing schemes and they help with promotional activities to encourage sustainable travel. It should be noted the project team also have regular meetings with other city-wide stakeholder groups and all feedback received is treated equally.

In regard to the content of the consultation:

10. The survey's questions have been quality checked internally and by Commonplace, who performed this review two days prior to the 'go live' (online publication) date. The survey contains open and closed questions and does not violate any Commonplace principles. The open text options can be accessed by selecting 'add something else' under each option provided and there is a question on the final page (p.13 [Have Your Say Today](#)) which gives respondents the opportunity to comment in a free text box. The wording reads: 'If you have any other comments or feedback about our proposals, please use the space below'.
11. The Chair of Friends of Woodhouse Moor has also raised concerns about the quality of the survey questions, their use of 'biased language', as well as the time it takes to complete the survey. It is noted that the latter point is made in a contradictory way by Mr McKinnon, who says that 'the survey consultation is long and cognitively demanding' before stating that 'It should take at least 25 minutes to complete the consultation.'

The A660 proposals cover a long corridor with approximately 53 proposed changes. Connecting Leeds appreciate and consider all feedback as there is always room for improvement, however the team are confident the information is presented clearly, using a mix of images and text.

It is also not necessary to complete the entire survey, which the team developed with those who may be time-poor in mind. It is possible to only submit a section relevant to the respondent, as described on page 1 of the survey. The text reads: 'The survey has several sections showing our proposals. If you wish to feedback on all of our sections you can do so by clicking next at the bottom of this page. Alternatively, you can skip to a specific section or group of sections by using these links:'

As of the 27th March, the results received against the question on page 13 of the survey, which asks: 'Overall, please rate how easy this survey was to understand?' ([Have Your Say Today](#)) demonstrate that only 2 people had problem with the survey itself. The team will, where possible, learn from this feedback, however this is a very low number of respondents.

The project team are confident that the number of responses received (over 1,700) also indicates people were willing to take the time to complete the survey.

12. The Chair of Friends of Woodhouse Moor questions the choice of language used in the survey when referring to tree removal, use of space and rat-running, or re-routing vehicles.

The consultation breaks the route into sections and each section describes existing issues, proposals, benefits of the scheme and also a 'trade-offs' list, which honestly outlines the disadvantages of the proposal. Taken out of context, without the explanatory detail and images the team have gone to great efforts to provide, the wording can be interpreted in different ways. However, taken as a whole, the team are confident the survey is not biased and informs users of the potential downsides of the changes as well as the benefits.

Furthermore, the survey received 26% negative sentiment and 11% neutral responses, which suggests that the language used did not persuade otherwise or deter those who felt negatively or unsure from leaving negative or unsure comments.

13. **In regard to the high response rate**, Mr McKinnon states 'Commonplace state consultations should have open and closed questions. This matters especially if participants receive incentives. People might be responding to the remuneration, not because they care about the issues.'

No incentives or 'renumerations' of any kind have been offered to anyone. The A660 is a long corridor and the proposal spans three political wards. The Connecting Leeds team is proud of the response received, which is a result of commitment to the consultation process and innovative communications designed to engage as many people as possible. A full consultation has been undertaken in which anyone was able to respond.

14. **In regard to safety of cycle lanes**, the Chair states that 'By stating the changes would reduce accidents, they get around the obstacle of conservation area status, which makes changes difficult to achieve'.

Leeds City Council is committed to achieving the Leeds Safe Roads Vision Zero 2040 Strategy goal of eliminating road deaths and serious injury on Leeds' roads by 2040. The A660 is one of the busiest routes in Leeds and suffers from a high casualty rate with 172 recorded casualties happening along this road during 2016-2021. 71% of casualties involved people walking, wheeling or cycling, with most of these collisions happening at side roads or junctions.

The council has a statutory duty to balance improving safety and keeping traffic moving in support of its recently approved Vision Zero strategy. Difficult recommendations are often needed to balance a number of issues including environmental concerns, road safety and highway capacity considerations.

Confident cyclists currently use bus lanes or the carriageway, but by providing a segregated cycle path or shared-use path (Avenue Walk, Woodhouse Moor) it gives people who are newer to cycling an alternative to cycling in a bus lane, which can feel intimidating. People who cycle in shared-use spaces should be travelling at slower speeds and giving way to pedestrians.

Mr McKinnon's concerns about the shared cycle lane and cycle lanes behind bus stops have been recorded, alongside all the feedback from this consultation. Monitoring of recent schemes with such features do not support the general statement that 'shared cycle lanes (are) dangerous'.

Connecting Leeds also consulted several groups of people about these designs, based on, but not limited to age and accessibility/disability groups, and this engagement will continue.

15. **Regarding alcohol as a factor in casualties**, between 2016 and 2021 there were 172 recorded casualties on the section of the A660 between Shaw Lane and St Mark's Road. A pedestrian being under the influence of alcohol was recorded as a contributory factor for 11 of these casualties, all of which were pedestrian casualties. There were no collisions

recorded on this section of the A660 between 2016 and 2021 for which a driver being under the influence of alcohol was recorded as a contributory factor. For context, there were 50 pedestrian casualties in this area during this period.

Furthermore, the scheme has the potential to reduce the severity of these collisions even if alcohol is a contributory factor, as walking out into a cycle track poses less risk of serious injury than walking out into the carriageway. In addition, a narrower carriageway and reduced speed limit will lower speed and therefore the severity of a collision.

16. In regard to the loss of green spaces, trees and grass verge.

The council is committed to making Leeds carbon neutral by 2030. By providing sustainable alternatives to the car along this corridor, by promoting cycling, walking and the use of public transport, by improving bus flow and by providing new sustainable infrastructure to help residents reduce their own carbon footprint, the proposals aim to provide a viable alternative to the car and as people choose sustainable travel, pollution should decrease.

The project team is aware of the conservation area status and will ensure the design and use of materials is sympathetic to that. A Leeds City Council urban design team and Conservation Officer are involved in the scheme. The re-use of paving and kerb materials will be maximised and targeted at the areas of greatest conservation priority such as Woodhouse Moor.

Highways and Transportation take very seriously any loss of green space and there is a strategy in place to mitigate any losses. The specific loss of green space Mr McKinnon refers to is a small area adjacent to Woodhouse and Cinder Moor. On the Cinder Moor side, the proposals seek to narrow the verge by 50cm to accommodate a safe, segregated cycle track.

The Chair of Friends of Woodhouse Moor states: *'people should be asked how they feel about "green space being take away" or "paved green space" or "removing trees." Presumably people aren't asked because Connecting Leeds know that nobody likes green space being taken away or ruined.'*

The consultation asks respondents how they feel about this in a number of ways:

On page 7 people are asked to rate how they feel about 'overgrown shrubs to be removed' and 're-landscaped public space'. On page 8 the trade-offs are clearly stated as: 'eleven trees removed' and 'possible impact to grass verge'. The questions on page 8 also ask people how they feel about '11 trees removed and replaced'.

Page 8 also describes in detail the reasoning behind removing trees: *'A qualified arborist has carried out a complete arboricultural tree survey of the 73 trees along this section of the A660. Where possible we have sought to avoid impacting any trees however, these plans would impact 11 semi-mature trees. Varieties impacted include Oak, Lime and Sycamore - two are rated good quality with the remaining nine rated low quality.'*

All these trees were found to have a mixture of issues, including squirrel damage, soil compaction, root disturbance, close proximity to a bus shelter, girdling roots, or in a general poor condition... we would need to remove these trees. Relocating the trees would not be possible due to the issues listed above. However, our policy is to **replace every tree removed with a 3:1 semi-mature ratio.'**

Furthermore, every survey page invites respondents to write in a free text box to capture anything they may wish to say that falls outside the set questions.

In summary, there will be a potential loss of 11 trees due to the proposals. The trees are of poor health or provide poor ecosystem services* and there will be an opportunity to provide replanting. Leeds City Council has a policy to replant three trees for every tree which needs to be removed.

Without removing these trees:

- The team are unable to provide a cycle path/improved bus shelter facility.
- The team are unable to align street furniture to improve the pedestrian experience.
- The trees will remain but will need to be removed at a later date due to their reduced quality, causing further disruption to the road network.

The team will commission an arborist to oversee the work to ensure that tree roots are not damaged and there will be mitigation planting and conservation management.

17. Furthermore, the project team dispute that Mr McKinnon and others have not been informed about the changes to green space and the verge: "Improved landscaping" comes at the expense of almost a metre of grass verge at the Moor's edge. And roadway would replace green space at Hyde Park Corner. But we're not informed about either proposal.'

A representative of the team met with Mr McKinnon on three separate occasions to share the results of the tree survey and to discuss his concerns around the grass verge and green spaces:

- 10.11.2021 – First community site visit to discuss what residents/ community groups wanted to see in the area.
- 08.08.2022 – In person site visit to discuss the recommendations that Active Travel England had made for the scheme and what the implications may be for the area.
- 07.12.2022 – Tree survey results discussion held at Merrion House.

18. Summary

The A660 proposals support the delivery of the Transport Strategy for Leeds; essentially, for Leeds to be a city where you don't need a car, roads must be safe for people to walk, scoot, wheel and cycle.

Furthermore, better sustainable connectivity brings equity benefits – connecting people who may not be able to afford to own a car, for example, to employment and education opportunities. New sustainable travel infrastructure and an improved bus corridor should result in fewer private or individual cars being used for these journeys. By providing a sustainable alternative choice, the proposals aim to connect businesses to customers while reducing air pollution, which disproportionately impacts younger and poorer people.

Given the casualty record on this route and the Transport Strategy objectives, doing nothing is not an option. Given the consultation feedback, it would appear that, with some minor changes informed by this consultation, the team have developed a deliverable solution that is broadly acceptable to the public and meets the strategy objectives.

19. The team has offered to continue dialogue with Mr McKinnon to address his concerns about the scheme. The project team wish to reassure Mr McKinnon that his feedback and concerns have been recorded and will be assessed equally alongside all other feedback received during this consultation, as part of the project process.

What impact will this proposal have?

20. The project is to provide LTN 1/20 compliant cycling facilities along the A660 corridor starting from St Mark's Road to the Arndale Centre, Headingley. The project team are looking to make the route safer for all road users, as historically it has experienced a high number of collisions.

The plans include:

- widening footways
- creating safer cycle lanes
- prioritising buses
- making junctions safer

The scheme intends to significantly improve the walking environment for pedestrians and improve bus journey times through key infrastructure interventions along the corridor.

21. Building on the success of the temporary interventions installed on the A660, as part of the Emergency Active Travel Fund (Tranche 1), Leeds City Council would like to make the scheme permanent. The scheme will comprise:

- Segregated uni-directional cycle tracks that are LTN 1/20 compliant standard
- Shared use pedestrian and cycle facilities where it is not possible to install segregated facilities
- Comprehensive side road treatments to offer a high level of protection for cyclists from turning traffic – this will include signal- controlled crossings, some junction closures and Copenhagen style junctions, using lessons learnt from previous City Connect and other cycling schemes. Junction improvement schemes include the following:
 - 22 continuous crossings - Alma Road, Dennistead Crescent, Chapel Street, Shire Oak Street, Bennett Road, Shire Oak Road, Bainbrigge Road, Spring Road, Springbank Crescent, Richmond Avenue, Oakfield, Richmond Road, The Poplars, Orville Gardens, Buckingham Road, North Grange Road, North Hill Road, Ashwood Villas, Cumberland Road, Grosvenor Road, St Mark's Street, St. Mark's Avenue
- Traffic signal improvements to accommodate cycle facilities at junctions with B6157 North Lane/ Wood Lane; Regent Park Avenue/ Victoria Road/ Hyde Park Road/ Woodhouse Street; Rampart Road; Clarendon Road/Raglan Road.
- 6 additional signalized crossings arms added to reduce severance
- Upgrade of 2 junctions to include pre-signals (used to get the bus to the front of a queue)
- 3 junctions will be upgraded to use gating to protect downstream sections where there is no bus lane (Headingley Hill, in front of the Arndale Centre and inbound from the Clarendon Rd junction – St Mark's Road junction)
- 6 junctions will include traffic light priority (TLP) for buses using the TLP system (cycle and pedestrian crossings to enhance connectivity throughout the length of the scheme)
- All signals will be upgraded to include nearside crossing facilities, allowing consistency across the network.
- Improvements to bus waiting facilities which will include Real Time Information screens.
- All bus stops being retained will have a shelter and real time information units being installed.
- Increase of public realm area
- Upgrades to landscaping
- Additional benches (resting points in accordance with the Local Healthier Streets principles)
- Improved sightlines with low walls to improve feelings of safety
- Footway widening and upgrades
- All footways will be upgraded with damaged paving repaired and surfaces relaying where required
- Clarendon Road junction next to the Library pub footway widened to accommodate high number of pedestrians
- Headingley Hill inbound footway widened to accommodate high pedestrian flows and reduce pinch-points at bus stops

- Improved directional signage to support wayfinding of local facilities
- Cycle parking - Sheffield stands to be located at appropriate locations with a focus outside shops and local services

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

☒ Health and Wellbeing

☒ Inclusive Growth

☒ Zero Carbon

Health and wellbeing

22. The importance of physical activity for improving public health and wellbeing is long established. Cycling provides a convenient means of increasing physical activity, as well as being a non-weight bearing, efficient form of aerobic and cardiovascular exercise. Research has shown that incorporating cycling into a daily routine can help prevent or reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, colon and breast cancer, type-two diabetes, and obesity.

Any increase in the uptake of cycling, therefore, could have a substantial effect on improving physical activity and thus reducing the incidence of multiple health conditions associated with a sedentary lifestyle. This shift away from motorised transport will also contribute to the reduction of damaging noise and air quality emissions, both of which are responsible for negatively impacting on people's health.

Inclusive Growth

23. The scheme contributes to the Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy by providing segregated cycle facilities, which are a benefit to those without access to a private car and less confident cyclists who would feel safer and more comfortable with segregation from the main road traffic. The scheme therefore overcomes a barrier to travel for certain road users, some of which have protected characteristics, and enables them to access employment, education, training and social value opportunities.

Improved connectivity to employment, education, training and social value opportunities such as 3 university campuses, 2 local district centres, an urban park and a number of jobs linked to the night-time economy and some business centre services. The scheme also links areas of deprivation to the city centre.

Zero Carbon

24. The scheme will contribute significantly to the Tackling the Climate Emergency Strategic Economic Framework priority by reallocating road space from private vehicles to give priority to bus and active travel. The provision of LTN 1/20 compliant segregated cycle paths, enhanced footways and bus priority at traffic signals will make journeys by these modes more appealing in terms of improved safety and journey times.

Prioritising these sustainable and more environmentally friendly modes of travel and therefore reducing the number of private vehicle trips will contribute to a reduction in emissions.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: Hyde Park and Headingley, Little London and Woodhouse, Weetwood.

Have ward members been consulted? ☒ Yes ☐ No

25. A five-week consultation exercise on the A660 proposals took place from Monday 30th January to Sunday 5th March 2023. The consultation was primarily hosted online via Commonplace and was supplemented by 4 community events and community outreach, performed by Leeds Involving People. Stakeholders were also engaged separately throughout.

Stakeholder engagement was carried out with statutory stakeholders, with businesses and beneficiaries along the route and with special interest groups, or groups representing those with protected characteristics. Stakeholders may have also contributed to the consultation outside of our meetings and correspondence, for example via email, but all feedback received by any means has been considered as part of the consultation analysis and has been treated equally.

The consultation resulted in significant feedback from interested parties, largely supportive of the proposals. As of the 31st March the figures were:

1709 responses
12,794 visitors to page
13.4% of viewers filled in the survey (conversion rate)

63.3% positive sentiment
25.7% negative sentiment
11.1% neutral sentiment

4 public drop-in events with 282 attendees
52 paper surveys filled in.

The team also received feedback between the 5th and 12th March 2023 from North West Leeds Transport Forum and the Cardigan Centre's Elders Connect project, as well as the University of Leeds' Centre for Disabled Studies. This feedback is also factored into the above summary.

Stakeholders engaged or invited to engage
Local residents
Businesses and frontages
Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate, Councillor Helen Hayden
Deputy Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate, Councillor Peter Carlill
Schools: Lawnswood, Richmond, Spring Bank and Shire Oak
Universities: University of Leeds, Leeds Beckett University
Active Travel Champion, Councillor Peter Carlill

Disability Champion, Councillor Kevin Ritchie
Ward Members of the three wards affected by the proposals: Headingley and Hyde Park, Weetwood and Little London and Woodhouse
Bus Operators including First Bus
Taxi Operators
Leeds Cycle Forum and Sub-Forum
University of Leeds' Centre for Disability Studies
University of Leeds Faith Groups and Societies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddhist Meditation society • Christian Union • Islamic Society • Jewish Society • Sikh Society • NHSF (Hindu) Society
St Michael's and All Angel's Church
Motorcycle Action Group
Royal British Legion
Friends of Woodhouse Moor
North West Leeds Transport Forum
Clean Air Alliance
Friends of Beckett Park
Zero Carbon Headingley
Headingley Development Trust
Hyde Park Neighbourhood Forum
Little Woodhouse Community Association
North Hyde Park Neighbourhood Association
South Headingley Community Association
Age Friendly Steering Group
Access and Use-Ability Group
Disability And Wellbeing Network
Leeds Civic Trust
Headingley Town Team

Hyde Park Town Team
Voice, Influence and Change Youth group
Neurodiversity groups within LCC
National Federation of the Blind (UK)
Leeds Disabled People's Organisation
Leeds Local Access Forum
Cardigan Elders Community Hub

What are the resource implications?

26. The project will be funded as follows: Active Travel Fund Tranche 3 funding worth £10.4m and Leeds City Council section 106 funding worth £0.23m, totalling £10.63m.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

27. Risk on the A660 project is managed by Leeds City Council's standard processes, in accordance with Leeds City Council guidance and best practice and assured by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

Amending the scheme to address Friends of Woodhouse Moor's concerns might reduce its effectiveness in reducing casualties.

Active Travel England have funded the scheme on the condition it meets the latest guidance and to meet these standards, the proposals at Woodhouse Moor are required.

What are the legal implications?

28. Any legal orders or processes to deliver the scheme will be progressed as standard in accordance with national and LCC guidance.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

29. To incorporate the changes suggested by Friends of Woodhouse Moor's might reduce the scheme's effectiveness in reducing casualties and delivering inclusive growth, connectivity and sustainability benefits.

To do nothing is also not feasible as the existing issues of road safety, lack of connectivity and congestion would not be addressed.

How will success be measured?

- The scheme has a Monitoring and Evaluation framework, agreed by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and schemes will be monitored post-construction.
- Increase in active travel along the corridor.
- Decrease in recorded collisions and casualties along the corridor.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

30. A detailed timeline will be developed post-Business Case submission.

The scheme is expected to start on site in summer 2023 (STC).

Appendices

None.

Background papers

None.