

PETITION: 'TRAFFIC CONGESTION CAUSED BY THE MCDONALDS/BP SITE AT THE RUSH GREEN ROUNDABOUT' (HERTFORD)

Report of the Director of Environment and Infrastructure

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Executive Member: Phil Bibby, Highways and Environment

Local Members: Andrew Stevenson and Jonathan Kaye

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To advise County Council of the receipt of a petition relating to traffic congestion at the Rush Green Roundabout, Hertford and to set out for Members the background and other relevant information of which officers are aware relating to the subject matter of the petition.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Notice of intention to present a petition containing 1,000 or more signatures has been received pursuant to the County Council's Petition Scheme. The petition, entitled '*Traffic congestion caused by the McDonalds/BP site at the Rush Green Roundabout*' asks the Council to:

"Work closely with Hertfordshire Police and McDonalds/BP to find and implement a safe solution to the major congestion caused by the vehicles queuing to enter the site and to alleviate the potential for a serious accident."

- 2.2 The County Council's Petition Scheme provides that officers will prepare a Report for Members setting out the background and other relevant information of which they are aware relating to the subject matter of the petition but will not give a recommendation as to how the petition should be dealt with.

3. Procedure

- 3.1 The petition which is the subject of this report has been received in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme (Annex 22 to the Constitution).
- 3.2 The deadline for receipt of motions from Members in respect of this Report under Standing Order 9 (3) is noon on Thursday, 12 July 2018.
- 3.3 Paragraph 54 of the Petition Scheme provides that the Petition Organiser will be given three minutes maximum to present the petition and will not otherwise be allowed to speak at the meeting. There is then a short debate by Council.
- 3.4 Paragraph 57 of the Petition Scheme states:

The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at the meeting. It may decide to take the action the petition requests or not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate. Where the issue is one on which the Council Executive is required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. If the Council does not decide to deal with the petition in some other way, it will (at the discretion of the Chairman) be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the appropriate Cabinet Panel or to officers for consideration and report to the Local Member and Group Spokesmen.

- 3.5 The subject matter of the petition relates to an Executive function and as such Council cannot make a decision on it but may make a recommendation to Cabinet if it so wishes.

4 Background and Other Relevant Information

- 4.1 The Rush Green roundabout in Hertford is a major interchange between two major A roads - the A414 carrying east-west traffic and A10 carrying north-south traffic and, as such, is a strategic node in Hertfordshire's road network. The roundabout also has junctions for two roads carrying local traffic and provides access to the Rush Green services which comprise a BP petrol station with integral small M&S food shop and coffee retail facilities and a McDonald's restaurant and drive-through. These services share a single access/egress point on the roundabout and there is no alternative vehicle access to the services other than via the roundabout. When there is high demand for the services, vehicles queuing to get into the services queue back onto the roundabout which can interfere with the free flow of traffic on the roundabout and some of the other movements on and off the roundabout.
- 4.2 Planning permission was granted (by East Herts District Council) in 2000 for the development of the site (3/00/0497/FP and 3/00/0606/FP).

- 4.3 BP Oil Uk Limited and McDonald's Restaurants Limited are the registered land owners of the site. The McDonald's restaurant and drive through are operated by a franchisee, not by McDonald's directly.
- 4.4 In 2006, traffic signals were installed on the Rush Green roundabout, primarily to reduce accidents. The signals were successful in achieving this; in the three year prior to their installation there were 58 personal injury collisions, during the three year period after the signals were installed this had dropped significantly to thirteen such accidents.
- 4.5 In August 2013 County Council Highways Development Management received correspondence (but not a formal planning application) from the McDonald's franchisee, setting out possible proposals for a new junction design and revised car park arrangement. The County Council reviewed the proposals and provided further comments and safety advice; however, the County Council's conclusion at the time was that the proposal would in fact make the situation more problematic. The County Council also included some suggested changes to a submitted 'sketch' drawing. Following this exchange no reply was received from the franchisee concerning the comments and safety advice.
- 4.6 In October 2014, the County Council was contacted by the surveying team at McDonald's UK, concerning the same junction and car park design as submitted by the franchisee the previous year. The County Council once again provided comments and safety advice and suggested a follow up meeting. The County Council did not receive any subsequent reply or suggested dates for a meeting.
- 4.7 In 2014, the Local Member for the western side of the roundabout (including the BP/McDonalds site) Cllr Andrew Stevenson, commissioned the County Council Integrated Transport Projects (ITP) Team to undertake a review of the highway network in and around the roundabout and make recommendations. As a result additional signage to fully implement a 'No Stopping' (Clearway) of the roundabout was agreed and implemented in partnership with Hertfordshire Constabulary. Police officers have subsequently carried out a number of enforcement exercises.
- 4.8 In 2015 further work on the above project was undertaken to look at the feasibility and benefits of installing additional lane guidance road markings and 'Keep Clear' markings on the roundabout where queues for the services can block the area where traffic from Stanstead Road joins the roundabout. This may be the proposal for a 'yellow box junction' referred to in a separate petition as 'Keep Clear' markings and a yellow box junction marking would seek to achieve similar ends, albeit by different regulatory routes.
- 4.9 A safety audit of the proposals raised a number of safety issues with these proposals as well as concerns that they would interfere with the phasing and optimisation of the traffic signals, creating other issues. As a result these proposals did not proceed.

- 4.10 In March 2017, Cllr Andrew Stevenson chaired a public meeting held at County Hall to discuss a number of highway network management issues concerning Ware Road, Hertford. This included comments from residents about traffic issues in and around the roundabout. McDonald's and Hertfordshire Constabulary representatives attended and were available to comment and answer questions.

5 **Current Initiatives**

- 5.1 Cllr Andrew Stevenson and County Council officers have continued to work in partnership with Hertfordshire Constabulary to continue the enforcement of the 'No Stopping' (Clearway) on the roundabout in order to better manage the issue, with the East Herts Chief Inspector taking a personal interest in the situation in order to find a solution. This included the police making the site owners aware that legal action could be taken if they did not act to address the issues created by their customers queuing to access the site.
- 5.2 Subsequently, a meeting has been held with representatives from the site owners, the franchisee, Hertfordshire Constabulary, County Council officers and the Local Member. At this meeting a number of proposals concerning new access and egress arrangements were presented by the site owners. There was general agreement that all parties involved will jointly explore the most effective solutions to the current situation.
- 5.3 County Council Highways Development Management have now received 4 (draft) access and egress arrangements which are currently under review on safety and highway implications grounds. This initial first step is welcomed, however a number of other issues (viability, funding of the works, landownership etc.) will need to be agreed by all parties before the County Council can be fully satisfied that the proposed revisions to access and egress arrangements are deliverable.
- 5.4 The initial work on the proposed access and egress arrangements is currently being undertaken and early conclusions are expected to be available in the coming months. Following this, and only if the proposals are deliverable, further more detailed work in terms of a fully 'costed' scheme, including what funding will be provided by the site owners will need to be undertaken.
- 5.5 In addition to continuing to work with all concerned to address the issues created by access to the services, the County Council continues to monitor for any emerging patterns of accidents on the roundabout (as it does across the road network). As a result of this ongoing monitoring, two clusters of accidents were noted and investigated on the roundabout, although neither is in the vicinity of the services.
- 5.6 One such cluster around the top of the southbound on-slip to the A10 had no obvious causal pattern that could be identified and addressed, so no

further works are planned there at this stage. The other cluster was around the junction with Stanstead Road on the southern side of the roundabout (not the northern junction with Stanstead Road adjacent to the services) and design work is currently ongoing to look at appropriate measures to help address these accidents.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 None arising from this Report.

7. Equalities Implications

7.1 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of, and have themselves rigorously considered the equalities implications of the decision that they are taking.

7.2 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the County Council's statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum, this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.

7.3 The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

7.4 No EqIA was undertaken in relation to this matter.

Background Information

None