

OPEN

## Highways and Transport Committee

19 September 2024

### Crossing Facilities Strategy

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**Report of: Tom Moody, Director of Highways and Infrastructure**

**Report Reference No: HTC/07/24-25**

**Ward(s) Affected: All**

#### **Purpose of Report**

1. This report brings forward the Cheshire East Crossing Facilities Strategy (Appendix 1) for adoption into formal Council practice.

#### **Executive Summary**

2. Demand for crossing facilities exceeds the Council's available funding each year. There is a need for a consistent approach to the prioritisation of locations for controlled crossings (i.e. those controlled by traffic signals).
3. There is no statutory requirement or obligation to provide crossing facilities. Provision is considered within affordability of capital and maintenance as part of prioritisation of funding based upon consideration of safety issues.
4. The Council's current Crossings Policy dates from 2011 and was based on Department for Transport (DfT) guidance from 1995, which was withdrawn and superseded in 2019.
5. Following a decision by this committee in January 2023 the Council has developed and consulted upon a revised strategy for considering requests for crossings facilities. The proposed strategy will help the Council improve the way it manages and maintains the local highway network by providing a consistent process for considering crossing requests and determining the priority for funding.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Highways and Transport Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the adoption of the Cheshire East Crossing Facilities Strategy in Appendix 1.
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Highways and Infrastructure to make technical amendments to the Cheshire East Crossing Facilities Strategy and its Prioritisation Matrix and update the Highways and Transport Committee on any significant changes as required.

## Background

6. The Council's Crossing Policy was approved in December 2011, and sets out the criteria for selecting controlled crossings. This policy was based upon advice in the Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/95 and used the PV<sup>2</sup> method of calculating the degree of conflict between vehicles and pedestrians.
7. The policy context is that LTN 1/95 was withdrawn in December 2019 and was superseded by the Traffic Signs Manual Chapter 6 Traffic Control (2019) ("TSM"). The TSM promotes a qualitative approach to assessing potential controlled pedestrian crossing points. The Council strategy on crossing facilities should therefore be with reference to the TSM.
8. A Notice of Motion proposed at Council in October 2022 requested changes to the process for considering pedestrian crossings. A report outlining actions to address the issues was provided in January 2023.
9. A new approach and Priority Matrix has been produced to change the criteria for prioritisation. It also includes a formalised qualitative assessment and informal consultation with the ward members and relevant Town or Parish Council. This new approach will also enable greater consideration to be given to trip generators such as shop locations, schools and other community facilities.
10. The aim of this approach is to identify suppressed demand for crossings and to factor in local support for the proposals. It is considered that this information will help give wider consideration at an earlier stage in the assessment, determination of the type of crossing and help establish relative priority with other sites.
11. Traditionally, the national approach to traffic signal design has tended to prioritise vehicular movement over pedestrians. Department for Transport design documents such as Manual for Streets and Manual for Streets 2 have shifted focus to considering the wider street scape and the types of users in an area.
12. The setting of traffic signal timings is intrinsically linked to traffic conditions and pedestrian movements. Timings are outlined in the TSM Chapter 6. Any future amendments to traffic signal timing in the Borough must be linked to this.

## Consultation and Engagement

13. On 23 November 2023, this Committee resolved to consult on the draft Crossing Facilities Strategy. The consultation was carried out for 6 weeks between 29 January and 10 March 2024.
14. The consultation was promoted to a wide range of stakeholders and a total of 149 consultation responses were received.
15. The full consultation report is shown in Appendix 2.

### *Questionnaire Feedback*

16. A significant proportion of respondents agreed the proposed strategy should be adopted by the council (65% agree, 26% disagree).
17. Those in agreement the strategy should be adopted welcomed the improvements to it and felt it represented a step forward. They were also pleased to see a move on from the PV<sup>2</sup> method of assessing locations.
18. Survey respondents were also asked to rate the Prioritisation Matrix Areas with respect to whether the right measure was used and whether the proposed scores for each measure were appropriate.
19. Key findings were as follows:
  - a. Area G – Supporting growth - saw the highest levels of support (71% agreed the right measures had been used, 67% agreed the proposed scores were appropriate);
  - b. Area A – Casualty Reduction - 50% agreed the right measures had been used, 41% agreed the proposed scores were appropriate; and
  - c. Area B – Sustainable Travel - saw the lowest levels of support. 40% agreed the right measures had been used, 33% agreed the proposed scores were appropriate.
20. Survey respondents also made various suggestions around items that should be added to the Strategy and Prioritisation Matrix.
21. Amendments to the Crossing Facilities Strategy and Prioritisation Matrix following the consultation are shown in Appendix 3.

## Reasons for Recommendations

22. This strategy aligns with the Cheshire East Corporate Plan 2021-2025 aim of being '*A thriving and sustainable place*' under the priority '*A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel*'.

23. Adoption of the strategy will improve outcomes provided by the highways service by:
  - a. Enabling a uniform approach to manage new and existing pedestrian crossings on the highway network.
  - b. Ensuring the management of new and existing pedestrian crossings is aligned with the latest industry guidance on traffic signal control.

## Other Options Considered

24. The alternative to implementing a revised strategy is to continue with the existing (2011) policy. This would mean that the strategy is inconsistent with the 2019 changes to the Traffic Signs Manual, which is not acceptable.

## Implications and Comments

### *Monitoring Officer / Legal*

25. There are no legal implications associated with the implementation of this strategy.

### *Section 151 Officer / Finance*

26. There is no statutory obligation to provide crossing facilities. Decisions to construct crossings facilities are subject to the prioritisation of capital fundings within the Council's affordability and the availability of revenue resources for maintenance and liability arising across the whole life of the asset. Any schemes identified will be managed through a prioritisation process to ensure existing highway budgets are not exceeded.
27. Decisions to install crossings facilities will be prioritised using the strategy, with an emphasis of reducing revenue implications where controlled crossings are not necessary.

### *Policy*

28. This Strategy aligns with the following strategic aims and priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25:

| <b>An open and enabling organisation.</b>                                    | <b>A council which empowers and cares about people</b>  | <b>A thriving and sustainable place</b>                     |
|--|---|---|
| Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making. | Work together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient. | A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel |

| <b>An open and enabling organisation.</b>   | <b>A council which empowers and cares about people</b>                         | <b>A thriving and sustainable place</b> |
|---|--|---|
| Listen, learn and respond to our residents, promoting opportunities for a two-way conversation                  | Reduce health inequalities across the borough                                  |   |
| Promote and develop the services of the council through regular communication and engagement with all residents | Increase opportunities for all children and young adults with additional needs |   |

29. Where crossing facilities have been requested to be installed to make developments acceptable from a transport perspective (e.g. under s106 agreements) but have yet to be constructed, decisions to proceed with those crossings will be reviewed against this strategy prior to proceeding with schemes.

#### *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

30. An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted to ensure that this strategy considers the needs of all community members and avoids discrimination.
31. Where pedestrian crossings are considered, this will benefit vulnerable road users with protected characteristics such as children, the elderly and those with mobility impairments and disabilities, both visible and non-visible.

#### *Human Resources*

32. This strategy will be implemented by the existing Highways service alongside Cheshire East Highways. There are no additional or changed HR requirements as a result of this decision.

#### *Risk Management*

33. The proposed strategy sets out a clear and consistent approach for how the Council will manage new and existing crossing facilities. The strategy is aligned with current guidance. This will reduce the reputational risk regarding consistency of considering crossing requests.

#### *Rural Communities*

34. The proposed strategy relates to the whole of the local roads network in Cheshire East, recognising the differences between urban and rural roads. There are no specific rural community impacts arising from the proposed strategy.

### *Children and Young People / Cared for Children*

35. Children and young people are a recognised group of vulnerable road users. As such, they are expected to benefit from improved pedestrian crossings in Cheshire East. There are no specific issues related to children and young people / cared for children associated with the implementation of the proposed strategy.

### *Public Health*

36. Improved pedestrian crossings can positively contribute to public health improvements by reducing road accidents and encouraging active travel. There are no specific Public Health impacts associated with the proposed strategy.

### *Climate Change*

37. Improved pedestrian crossings can encourage greater levels of active travel, as an alternative to motorised travel, thereby contributing to the Council's objectives for reducing transport-related carbon emissions. There are no specific Climate Change impacts associated with the implementation of this strategy.

| <b>Access to Information</b> |  |
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| Appendices:                  | Appendix 1 Crossing Facilities Strategy<br>Appendix 2 Consultation Summary<br>Appendix 3 Changes Following Consultation              |
| Background Papers:           | <None>   |