

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	20 November 2023
Subject:	A4 Safer Roads scheme
Lead Member:	Cllr Puja Bedi Transport, housing, highways, the environment and environmental services
Chief Officer:	Pat Hayes - Executive Director Property and Housing
Contact Officer:	Savio DeCruz – Associate Director Place Operations
Ward(s):	Chalvey, Cippenham Green, Cippenham Manor, Cippenham Village, Colnbrook & Poyle, Haymill, Langley Foxborough, Langley Marish, Langley St Marys, Northborough and Lynch Hill Valley, Slough Central, Upton and Upton Lea
Key Decision:	YES
Exempt:	NO
Decision Subject To Call In:	YES
Appendices:	Appendix 1 - DfT Safer Roads - A4 Report Appendix 2 - Summary of Countermeasures Appendix 3 - A4 Consultation Report Appendix 4 EqIA

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to introduce road safety improvements on the A4 from the Huntercombe crossroads at the borough boundary to the intersection of the M4 Junction 5 roundabout with the works being funded by the Department for Transport's (DfT) Safer Roads Fund grant.
- 1.2 The purpose of the funding for this scheme is to reduce the number of fatal and serious injuries for all road users along the A4 in Slough and the associated impact on families affected by collisions. This report should be seen as a positive approach to reduce injuries both for vulnerable road users as well as drivers/commuters and provides our communities with a safer environment.
- 1.3 This report aligns the road safety objectives within the Council's Local Transport Plan 3, to reduce the number of road accidents and casualties and is also aligned with the Corporate Plan to enable "A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives".

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- (a) Approve the implementation of the road safety measures outlined in this report as part of the Safer Roads Fund scheme on the A4.
- (b) Delegate authority to the Executive Director for Regeneration, Housing and Environment, in consultation with the Lead Member for transport, housing, highways, the environment and environmental services, to approve the revised road safety Summary of Countermeasures identified in Appendix 2;
- (c) To approve the procurement for services and construction associated with the Summary of Countermeasures in Appendix 2;
- (d) To approve the allocation of grant funds for the installation of speed enforcement cameras on the A4 to Thames Valley Police.

Reason:

In 2016, the Government established a Road Safety Fund as part of its ongoing investment in the national transport infrastructure. The aim of the funding was set out to provide financial resources to local authorities whose road network had the highest recorded risk of fatal and serious collisions. The A4 in Slough was identified with having a disproportionate number of casualties based on the criteria set by the DfT. The funding allocated has been ring-fenced to deliver road safety measures along the A4 between its junction with Huntercombe Lane South/North and the A4/M4 Junction 5.

This report seeks approval to deliver the Safer Roads Fund (SRF) grant funded mitigation measures that have been identified to improve road safety concerns along the A4.

The proposed mitigation measures will aim to;

- Reduce road infrastructure related risk by delivering road surfacing and traffic signals upgrades and to remove and/or improve street furniture such as signs and guard-rails that are contributing to the increase in collisions and casualties. The improvements are aimed to reduce the severity of collisions from fatal to serious and from serious to slight to help save lives along the A4.
- Introduce road safety measures that enable the Council to meet its statutory duty under section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and to take steps both to reduce and prevent accidents on its network.

Approving the recommendations set out in this report will enable the SRF road safety measures to be implemented, delivering casualty reduction (saving lives) and wider improvements to support road safety and transport infrastructure in the Borough.

Commissioner Review

Commissioners have no detailed comments of the proposals. The report is being considered by Cabinet, the council's strategic body. In considering the report Cabinet should resist the temptation to be drawn into detailed traffic management design and remain focussed on the strategic issues under consideration.

2. Report

Introductory paragraph

- 2.1 In November 2016, the Secretary of State for Transport announced a £3 billion roads investment package. The Safer Roads Fund was allocated part of this funding to upgrade 50 of England's most dangerous local A-road sections. The SRF is specifically targeted at delivering road upgrades and improvements to reduce the number and severity of collisions on the 50 highest-risk local A-road sections, based on the Road Safety Foundation's 2016 analysis. The 50 highest-risk local A-road sections were identified on the basis of risk (crashes per billion vehicle kilometres driven) rather than the traditional metric of crash density (fatal or serious crashed/km).
- 2.2 A key aim of the DfT's Safer Roads Fund is to facilitate a Safe System approach. This philosophy dictates that highway authorities proactively manage risk on their road network rather than waiting for collisions to occur before addressing the road safety concerns. The "Safe System" approach seeks to introduce improvements that will reduce the number and severity of those collisions.
- 2.3 In Slough, the Road Safety Foundation's 2016 analysis identified the A4 between its junction with Huntercombe Lane South/North and the A4/M4 Junction 5 as one of the 50 high-risk roads in England.
- 2.4 Whilst historical collision data informed the DfT's selection process, the approach to identifying specific sections for treatment used an assessment of hazards and road features via bespoke software analysis of a road video (iRAP ViDA tool). No figures were provided stating specific risk rates, but an analysis of fatal and serious collisions was undertaken that showed 3 fatal and 44 serious collisions on this route between 2011-2015 (the data and period defined by the DfT for categorising risk). For completeness, fatal and serious collisions between 2016 to February 2022 shows that there were an additional 4 fatal and 42 serious collisions on the A4.
- 2.5 It is clear that the A4 due to its position i.e. running through the centre of Slough is a major issue. This problem cannot be changed but the highway authority can look to reduce the impact on residents and commuters by making it safer for all users.
- 2.6 Underpinning a review of the identified route using the iRAP tool resulted in setting out the need for the following series of road safety measures aimed at reducing risk on the route:
 - 30mph speed limit along appropriate extents of the A4 – to reduce the severity of collisions when they occur. **This was approved by Cabinet in December 22.**
 - Average speed cameras – to monitor speed over a longer stretch of road and aid driver compliance and to be implemented jointly with Thames Valley Police.
 - Red-light camera systems – to detect speed and red-light violations as well as illegal turns and pedestrian crossing violations and to be implemented jointly with Thames Valley Police

- Road surface treatments – to improve vehicle grip particularly in adverse weather conditions along high use area on the A4 where required.
- Improved pedestrian and cycle crossings – for safe movement across the A4 and side roads Enforcing banned turns at junctions will reduce the chances of a visually impaired person being hit by a vehicle believing it is safe to cross as indicated by the green man and tactile cone and collisions with cyclists crossing the junctions.
- Removal of roadside hazards – improve visibility for all road users by removing guard-rail and other furniture that will subsequently improve visibility for all users.
- Decluttering - improve visibility and obstructions that could create an increase severity if struck by vehicles or cyclists.

2.7 Following the successful submission in 2017 of the Council's business case outlining the interventions to the DfT's Safer Roads Fund, Slough Borough Council was awarded £1,711,000 for a scheme to be introduced and profiled over a 2-year programme. Due to the pandemic, the DfT delayed payment of the grant allocation to March 2021.

2.8 Since the proposals were submitted as part of the application, several local and national priorities have changed. The grant funding will therefore be used, in part, to review the original plans that proposed counter measures to introduce safer roadsides, safer road surfaces and lanes, safer speeds and safer pedestrians and cyclists and tailor the scheme to meet the changed environment, prior to implementation and subject to DfT approval. The safety improvements identified in Appendix 2 will now be included within the works programme for the A4 cycleway to ensure best value and minimal disruption on the highway.

2.9 Delivery of the SRF project will contribute to the overarching reduction in those killed and seriously injured on the A4 and the approach then applied across the borough.

2.10 Slough continues to have a disproportionate number of collisions and casualties to our neighbours and in part this is down to a reduction in roads policing presence but also due to the road layout with long section of straight roads and a high proportion of residential properties front the A4 and other main roads.

2.11 The cost to the public purse for collisions and casualties is set out below using the Highway Economic Note 2022 data:

Severity	Cost per casualty (£)	Cost per collision (£)
Fatal	2,250,876	2,527,520
Serious	252,935	289,949
Slight	19,499	29,127
Average for all severities	92,168	124,272
Damage only		2,686

Aside from the cost to public purse, there is the emotional impact that collisions have on families even down to damage only incidents. A key requirement on the

Council will be to take all reasonable endeavours to reduce collisions and the subsequent fatal and serious injuries that result from them.

2.12 The current collision data for Slough is as follows:

Year	Crash Severity fatal	Casualties Severity fatal	Crash Severity Serious	Casualties Severity Serious	Crash Severity Slight	Casualties Severity Slight
2016	2	2	8	10	55	83
2017	0	0	5	6	63	90
2018	1	3	8	9	45	54
2019	0	0	7	8	41	49
2020	0	0	6	6	31	40
2021	1	1	6	6	38	43
2022	1	1	6	7	42	54
2023	0	0	0	0	8	11
Total	5	7	46	52	323	424

Table 1. A4 Bath Road Huntercombe Lane South and Huntercombe Lane North to its junction with M25 Junction 5

Entire Slough Borough Collision Data

Year	Crash Severity fatal	Casualties Severity fatal	Crash Severity Serious	Casualties Severity Serious	Crash Severity Slight	Casualties Severity Slight
2016	4	4	43	55	362	478
2017	0	0	38	50	317	424
2018	7	14	39	44	238	302
2019	2	2	34	43	240	287
2020	0	0	31	36	167	210
2021	6	8	30	33	181	216
2022	3	3	33	47	199	238
2023*	0	0	8	12	54	69
Total	22	31	256	320	1758	2224

Table 2 Entire Borough Collision Data

**Data until March 2023 and includes motorway data*

Though there are fluctuations in fatal injuries, the level is still not acceptable. Serious injuries are still high and can quite easily move into the fatal category if no interventions are implemented.

2.13 Options considered

Option 1: Do nothing

2.14 Do nothing is an option as long as the highway authority complies with undertaking assessments on collisions. However, this option is not recommended as it would not comply with the grant award or achieve any casualty reduction and hence the funds would need to be returned to the DfT.

Furthermore, if no countermeasures are undertaken, it is likely the trends would continue, leading to more fatal and serious injuries on and around the A4.

This option is not recommended.

Option 2: Introduce additional road safety measures

Implement risk reduction measures throughout the scheme including additional enforcement cameras where appropriate. Review and remove infrastructure such as guard-rails/barriers and signs contributing to the severity of collisions. Introduce new pedestrian and cycling measures to increase safe and sustainable transport.

Delivery of this option satisfies the scheme sponsor (DfT) by addressing road safety concerns that were identified by the Road Safety Foundation and helps the Council fulfil its statutory under section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 to “take steps both to reduce and prevent accidents” on its network.

This is the recommended option.

- 2.15 The completed scheme will contribute to the realisation of the following strategic objectives;

The Corporate Improvement and Recovery Plan

Corporate Plan 2023-27 (A fresh start)

- Our Purpose: Closing the healthy life expectancy gap, by focusing on children
- **A borough for children and young people to thrive**; by introducing a safer road network that enables them to walk, cycle and drive to access facilities for education, play areas, home and work and as a result tackling obesity.
- **A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives**; An environment that helps residents live more independent, healthier and safer lives needs by introducing road safety measures that improve the road network for all road users.
- **A cleaner, healthier and more prosperous Slough**; A council that lives within our means, balances the budget and delivers best value for taxpayers and service users by ensuring the correct governance and procurement processes for the A4 Safer Roads scheme are in place to provide robust and clear adherence to the requirements and Infrastructure that reflects the uniqueness of Slough's places and a new vision for the town centre by providing transport infrastructure that will reduce the severity of fatal and serious injury collisions along the A4

Proposed programme

A high-level approach to revise the outputs and proposed engineering interventions to deliver the SRF project includes:

- 2.16 Assess potential changes and priorities for the route.
- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the potential for active travel modes such as cycling and walking. There are increased incentives to deliver more

sustainable and healthy transport modes where possible. Since the original plans were drawn up including new land use development plans, which may also impact on traffic and safety along the route. These will be considered.

2.17 Section Review original scheme and consider changes to original proposals.

- Traffic volumes and speeds for 2021 compared to 2016 (as used in the submission) will be analysed, with the road to be re-analysed using the Safer Roads analysis software.

2.18 Public Consultation Exercise

- A consultation exercise has been undertaken which incorporated the Safer Roads and A4 Cycle schemes. A joint consultation was undertaken to gauge residents' responses about the proposed countermeasures that have been developed to tackle road safety issues that are specific to cyclists and pedestrians. The responses relating to the Safer Roads scheme are included in Appendix 3.
- It can be seen that the responses are not consistent in terms of supporting works to improve safety. For example, improvements to junctions to help pedestrians and cyclists are not supported equally, new crossing facilities on Goldsworthy Way where there are known elderly residents is not supported. It is assumed that some of the responses entered were not supportive of the A4 cycleway scheme as opposed to safety improvements for the wider public.
- There are objections to the removal of guard-rail from the A4 however, this is part of the improvements the Council need to introduce to reduce casualties both from cars and also pedestrians. The Council has previously adopted this approach in the centre of Slough and at other locations on the A4. Those using the A4 will often see pedestrians jumping over guard-rail into "live" traffic and also children walking around guard-railings to take the shortest journey. This in itself leads to a higher probability of collisions and associated fatal and serious injuries. Drivers normally are not expecting pedestrians to jump over guard-rail especially into "live" traffic areas. By removing the guard-rail we are moving some of the responsibility to drivers to be more aware of the urban setting and hence be cautious when driving along the A4.
- The speed reduction along the A4 approved by Cabinet in December 22, together with removal of street furniture and enforcement will see a reduction in collisions but will also improve the street scene in Slough which has deteriorated in the past few years.

2.19 Commercial activity to procure specialist suppliers and award contracts.

- To deliver specialist work related to scheme delivery, a procurement exercise will be undertaken. Officers will look to the market to offer innovative and cost-effective solutions. Where possible, small to medium enterprises will be encouraged to participate in the tender process, subject to meeting the Councils contract procedures.

2.20 Deliver scheme outputs

- Scheme delivery will be undertaken by the Contractor/s selected to deliver the A4 Cycle and Safer Roads scheme.

- A procurement exercise will be undertaken for delivery of any specialist work that cannot be delivered by the main contractor.

2.21 Monitoring and Evaluation

- A project manager will be responsible for tracking benefits and reporting any exceptions to the DfT/ Members, monitoring during implementation and ensuring that mitigation measures identified in the risk register are undertaken and adhered to.
- 'Before' speed surveys and collision data analysis have been undertaken, to provide a baseline and to prepare for establishing if the scheme has been a success once implemented, when further surveys and analysis will be undertaken. Outcomes will be monitored one year post implementation. Findings will continue to inform the Council's strategic approach to Road Safety.

Background

- 2.22 The SRF project is specifically targeted at regulating driver behaviour and delivering road safety engineering interventions to reduce the number and severity of collisions along the A4. Based on the assessment criteria 37 sections of the A4 in Slough were classified as being 'high-risk' and then 13 'medium-risk' road sections.
- 2.23 Following the award of the SRF grant, the Council submitted a proposal, which set out a benefit-cost ratio (BCR) of 8:1, estimating 54 fatal and serious injuries would be saved over a 20 year period. As we are reviewing the proposal it is will be essential that any proposed changes resulting from re-running the IRAP model does not reduce the BCR value.
- 2.24 The sections of the A4 with the highest risk are those with a 40mph speed limit as there are many uncontrolled junctions and entrances that could potentially lead to side-impacts with turning traffic. Given the limited space available it would not be possible to engineer out these conflicts therefore, a proposal to reduce the speed limit to reduce the chances of serious injuries occurring in these types of collisions was proposed and approved in the December 2022 Cabinet Report. Following consultation with Thames Valley Police, the 30mph speed limit is to be introduced in the next 2-3 months. The existing 60mph speed limit on the A4 Colnbrook By-pass from a point east of the junction of the A4 London Road and Sutton Lane to a point on the A4 Colnbrook By-Pass east of its junction with the western entrance of Lakeside Road will be lowered to 50mph.
- 2.25 Although speed compliance is currently good at peak times primarily due to the volume of traffic, at other times free-flowing traffic speeds are much higher. The mitigation proposals therefore seek to introduce infrastructure to support enforcement such as "speed and red-light" cameras and any other new technologies that are being developed. Other roadside hazards such as barriers and signs together with isolated areas of poor road surfaces will also be changed and/or improved to reduce casualties.
- 2.26 The SRF and A4 cycleway schemes share joint objectives, offering scope to improve journeys for all users and reducing risk and injuries.
- 2.27 Many of the junctions along the A4 will be addressed by both funds to deliver these wider benefits but also providing the council to make changes to road network that were previously not possible due to funding.

- 2.28 A series of road safety engineering measures will be introduced to include new speed limits where appropriate, enforcement solutions (i.e. installation of cameras), upgrades to crossing facilities, road surface treatment and removal of roadside hazards including decluttering. These improvements will also complement the A4 cycle scheme through the introduction of complimentary measures that seek to reduce risk for all road users.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial implications

- 3.1.1 The Council is in receipt of the Safer Roads Fund grant funds to a total value of £1.7m which covers the entirety of the scheme costs. The finance team will be engaged throughout the delivery programme in line with the monthly capital budget monitoring process. The SRF has been approved by the Capital Programme Board and quarterly reports will be discussed at the board to ensure delivery is on track.
- 3.1.2 Officers working on the project will be able to undertake full cost recovery for their time with the additional engineer, site supervisor and quantity surveyor costs also included for the on-site works. Engineers have provided options for designs to make sure that we have certainty on the budget and deliverability of the project.
- 3.1.3 As with all construction work on the highway, there are associated risks with unknown utility apparatus under the road surface. This unknown factor has been included in the contingency fund similar to the A4 Cycle scheme budget at 10% of total scheme costs. Furthermore, through a project board early risks will be mitigated via a value engineering process to ensure that there is no scope creep or budget overspend. As risks are mitigated the contingency will be released to allow for provisional work to be undertaken.

3.2 Legal implications

- 3.2.1 SBC has the statutory duty under section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 to “take steps both to reduce and prevent accidents” on its network. Traffic Regulation Orders are required to enable the introduction of measures that support the road safety mitigation measures, these will then be subject to procedures under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.
- 3.2.2 The Traffic Management Act 2004 (Section 16(1)) imposes a Network Management Duty to ensure that the Council secures the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority’s road network and facilitates the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority.
- 3.2.3 The guidance emphasises that the Public Sector Equality Duty still applies and in making any changes to their road networks, Councils must ensure that elements of a scheme do not discriminate, directly or indirectly and must consider their duty to make reasonable adjustments anticipating the needs of those with protected characteristics, for example, by carrying out equality impact assessments on proposed schemes. Engagement with groups representing disabled people and others with protected characteristics should be carried out at an early stage of scheme development. Visually impaired people, particularly, may find navigating

through changed layouts difficult if they are not thought through at the design and consultation stage.

3.2.4 Recommendations to undertake the highway works including temporary road closures traffic management plans, permanent signage and road markings will be undertaken using the Council's statutory powers as the Highway Authority and The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016.

3.2.5 All service contracts over £100,000 must be sealed and contract documentation will be reviewed by HB Public Law.

3.3 Risk management implications

<i>Description of risk</i>	<i>Risk/Threats/Opportunities</i>	<i>Proposed future controls</i>
Legal	Use of unskilled contractors or lack of maintenance of the infrastructure could result in legal implications and claims against the Council.	Procurement exercise with clearly set out specification will enable the Council to procure experienced suppliers.
Procurement	The Tender prices may exceed budget allocation available. Delays to the construction programme or contractor default	A pre-engagement activity will be undertaken to test market appetite for delivery. This risk will be actively monitored and managed and any significant changes to the scope of the programme will reported to the Lead Member and the DfT Appoint an established contractor with proven financial probity via a robust procurement process. Progress against the project programme to be scrutinised by project manager/board.
Finance	The total allocation remains at £1.7m. With revisions to the programme and outputs, costs may exceed this total. Inflation due to national/international events may impact costs. Ongoing maintenance implications.	Ongoing communication with the DfT will be undertaken to advise of agreed measures to be contained within the funding envelope. A suitable contingency allocation will be provided to mitigate against overspend. Appropriate project management and robust cost estimating will ensure that costs are as indicated and there is flexibility within the scheme to reduce the number of countermeasures used or to descope the scheme. Commercial activity to procure suppliers for delivery will look to factor in maintenance for a defined period and to work with the maintenance team that standardised equipment is used.

Scheme delivery team capacity	Delays during design stage	Recruitment of officers to project manage scheme design and delivery. Dedicated resource for design and construction.
Community Support	Unfavourable response to wider public consultation	Programme allows for detailed design to be modified where necessary to meet specific objections. However, the importance of road safety is paramount and needs to be considered first due to impact on affected families and victims.

3.4 *Environmental implications*

3.4.1 The SRF scheme is expected to reduce congestion through improvements to signals phasing and will be delivered in parallel with the A4 cycle scheme currently in development. Providing a safer route for pedestrians and cyclists will increase confidence in our residents and commuters to use more sustainable modes of transport especially for shorter journeys. The health benefits of slowing traffic to encourage active and sustainable travel choices is evident (NICE, guidance, active travel). By making the A4 a consistent 30mph will result in fewer accelerations and decelerations which contributes to an improved environment. Previous research into lower speeds (Transport for London) identified that stop/start driving conditions (from high speed to lower speed) could also increase pollution through wear and tear of tyres.

3.5 *Equality implications*

3.5.1 An EIA has been completed for this project and is included in Appendix 4.

The proposed scheme seeks to prioritise accessibility to ensure that the infrastructure is designed and built to accommodate the needs of all individuals. Overall the delivery of the scheme will have a positive impact on all groups. This will be achieved by introducing infrastructure such as tactile paving and tactile cones (located on the base of all pedestrian push-button units), better crossing points for the vulnerable road users. Off-side “green man” lights and the reduction in street furniture that sometimes blocks/obstructs passage for disabled users, prams and mobility scooters.

3.6 *Procurement implications*

3.6.1 Procurement for the revised mitigation measures has been undertaken in consultation with Procurement. A procurement exercise including use of existing framework agreement will be undertaken to procure any infrastructure associated with the mitigation measures.

3.7 *Workforce implications*

None

3.8 *Property implications*

None

4. Background Papers

Transport for London, Achieving lower speeds, the toolkit

IRAP toolkit – safer roads treatment <https://toolkit.irap.org>

Safer Roads Fund, Road Safety Foundation:

<https://roadsafetyfoundation.org/project/safer-roads-fund/>

<https://www.racfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Tackling-high-risk-roads-RSF-RACF-October-2017.pdf>