

3. LONGFELLOW STREET/SOUTHEY STREET TRAFFIC CALMING

RR 10550

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Corporate Plan Output: Urban Renewal Project	

The purpose of this report is to inform Board members of the background of the enhancement project in Longfellow/Southey and Millar Streets and to respond to the issues raised by Mrs Audrey Hart in her letter to the Board dated 11 August 1999.

BACKGROUND

The Council has initiated an Urban Renewal Programme to target priority areas with poor environmental conditions, unattractive streetscapes and a large percentage of housing in poor condition. As part of this, the Sydenham area was identified for an injection of funding over three years.

In order to target funds and to identify issues of concern to local residents, a series of public meetings were held, including one on 4 April 1995, for the area bound by Strickland Street, Tennyson Street, Southampton Street and Devon Street.

A number of issues were identified, both at the meeting and as a result of submissions. Those issues which related directly to Longfellow/Southey Streets focussed on two problems traffic volumes and lack of open space provision. Residents' suggestions included possible parks sites at either the Longfellow/Southey intersection or on a vacant section at 18 Southey Street. Other suggestions included closing off the Southampton/Longfellow corner as another possible park site. In addition to these responses an earlier letter to John Gibson (Senior Planner) dated May 1990 highlighted concerns regarding the speed and volumes of traffic from the then Longfellow/Southey Neighbourhood Support Group. This letter highlighted that many residents are elderly or are parents with young children and thus saw the safety of these streets as an important issue.

The proposal to investigate the possible road closure in order to create a pocket park and prevent traffic from using Longfellow Street as a short cut, was therefore included in the approved Urban Renewal Programme.

The Environmental Policy and Planning Unit developed a scheme which was put out as a publicity leaflet in March 1997. This met a mixed reaction with the local community, with 22 for and 22 against the proposal. A report was sent to the Board on 6 May 1997 outlining this consultation and recommending that we proceed with road stopping procedures. This was supported by the Board.

The proposed road stopping attracted 26 objections and an informal hearing was held on 13 February 1998 to hear the objectors. The recommendation of the hearing panel was that we did not proceed with the road closing.

Following this decision the Mayor and ourselves received a letter from the Neighbourhood Support Group on 29 March 1998 asking that the Council still carry out work in the area to address the issues of traffic calming and enhancement. After discussion with the Environmental Policy & Planning Unit it was decided to investigate other options to achieve what the residents wanted. A series of objectives were set for these options. The objectives were:

- creation of open green space
- streetscape enhancement
- removal of unnecessary traffic movements
- improved motorist behaviour
- creation of a recreational and play area
- reinforcing the sense of community

Three options were developed one being an idea originally suggested by the residents group. Residents were asked to vote on one of the three options. The most preferred being road humps with planting. The Community Board were sent a letter on the 12 May 1998 outlining the procedure we planned to undertake and the results were reported at its July meeting.

Following the Board meeting the road hump option was refined further and a publicity leaflet was delivered by myself and Mike Thomson to all the residents in August 1998. This is appended to this report. This clearly showed what we were proposing and asked for feedback from residents in relation to the location of the planters and road humps.

One resident asked for the restraint not to be placed outside their property as they have some classic cars which would have difficulty gaining access. This restraint was deleted. We did not receive comment from any of the other listed addresses.

We received 10 responses against the proposal as shown. Most of these were specifically dealing with the seating shown to be included in the centre of the planted area at the Southey/Longfellow intersection. This was therefore deleted.

A number of very supportive submissions were also received and a request for additional restraints in both Percival and Millar Streets. A letter was sent to residents in these two streets asking if they were happy to have a restraint outside their property. We were able to confirm an additional location in Millar Street but not in Percival Street.

Where possible, issues that were raised during this period of consultation were addressed and changes made before the project was formally designed.

Before a design brief was issued, the concept was peer reviewed with City Streets and accepted. The plans were also formally safety audited before tendering to ensure the design was safe. A number of minor recommendations were made and incorporated into the design. These mostly involved changes to the paint markings and widths of the vehicle lanes.

CONSTRUCTION

Construction of the works commenced on 3 June 1999. A start work notice was delivered to the houses adjacent to the first restraint in Southey Street with the additional notices to be delivered prior to work starting outside each property. Unfortunately, the surveyor marked out all of the restraints at once which meant that some notices were delivered the day after the paint was placed on the road.

Once construction commenced, additional crossing blocks were installed on residents driveways to ease access to their properties. At one property (Mr and Mrs Copley) these blocks were placed in front of the Telecom pole. I talked to Mrs Copley on the telephone and she indicated it was extremely difficult to access her property because of the pole. When I inspected the site I talked to Mr Copley who indicated that it wasn't a major problem, but if we could shift the pole, it would make access easier. Connectel (Telecom's maintenance contractor) were asked to shift the pole clear of the crossing blocks, but before they could commence this work we had a prolonged period of wet weather and Connectel's staff were re-directed to fixing telephone faults. This unfortunately delayed shifting of the pole by six weeks.

We also shortened a fence in Southey Street (Mr Free) due to difficulties associated with a transit van.

No other residents have approached the writer directly with access problems.

PRESENT DAY

Board members will have observed that a number of articles and letters have appeared in the local newspaper and the Press. Numerous telephone calls have been received from residents that do not like what has been constructed, but also an equal number that have congratulated the Council on what it has achieved. The majority of residents, even those that do not like the design, have stated that the traffic volumes have decreased markedly. This was one of the scheme's main criteria.

While construction was taking place, the contractor estimated that the volume of traffic decreased by 70% over the duration of the contract.

Mrs Hart has sent Board members a letter with an attached petition with a series of grievances outlined. I would like to address these issues.

Why were three men (not Councillors) given a free hand over this issue?

The design concept was undertaken by Peter Kensington (qualified landscape architect), Jeff Owen (Area Traffic Engineer) and myself. It was also peer reviewed by others in City Streets and independently safety audited.

Why, when we have over 100 signatures mostly from residents in the immediate area, was notice taken from people not living here?

The petition has been analysed. They have 78 signatures if you discount 2 from the same address and people living outside the area. There are 266 properties in the area affected by the works. This means that the petition has 29% of the households. The petition has been to all of the properties affected, indicating that 71% approve of what we have constructed, giving a majority who favour the status quo.

As indicated earlier in this report, when the publicity for this leaflet was delivered to residents in August 1998, we received only ten objections, most of which revolved around the issue of seating in the Southey/Longfellow intersection.

The traffic using these streets hasn't reduced, in fact if anything I think it has increased. Could a counter be installed?

Feedback from residents has indicated that the volume has decreased significantly. A counter could be installed, but we do not have data that we can have a direct comparison to.

The letter from "Emily Greaves" about the payment for using the roads needs an answer and for once a truthful one.

The letter referred to from 'Emily Greaves' refers to the Council policy of discouraging traffic from local roads as being a prelude to road tolls on arterial routes. At this time, the writer is unaware of any intention by Council to start placing tolls on arterial roads.

I personally do not think that Mr Bisley or the CCC can tell anyone what streets to drive on. The streets are there for us to all use (the hoons abuse) but they seem to get away with it.

The scheme implemented was originally requested by the residents and does not preclude traffic from using the area. It does force this driving to be more sedate and discourages unnecessary traffic.

Last Friday night (13/8/99) I was woken by a very loud hoon, then last night (14/8/99) was a particularly loud one. They know they can get away with whatever they want to do. Who's going to catch them.

Residents have indicated that the area has been plagued by “hoons” for a number of years and is no different from other areas of the city. If the problem persists, it may be appropriate for the police to be requested to target the area.

Has the Council got a bottomless purse? 5 years ago \$24,000 for a roundabout, this year \$91,000 for monstrosities this year (?) for shifting lamp post 2002 (?), new channeling plus underground wiring. What is the total going to cost the ratepayers?

The \$91,000 figure for this project involved over \$15,000 for consultation. Due to the amount and length of consultation carried out on this project, this cost is significant in the overall price. No further works are planned for the area until the 2010/11 financial year when the kerb and channels will begin to be replaced.

The works just built will be able to remain as part of this redevelopment.

When is the “drainage” going to be looked at. Every winter we have flooding, this year the new and also the extensions to the grass berms washed away as they were completely underwater. Consequently, parking to a lot of houses was cut still further, it is now first visitors get the parks.

The area has always had problems with drainage, due to the flat grade of the kerb and channel and the high water table in the vicinity. Unfortunately this problem cannot be solved until the kerb and channel is replaced and additional stormwater piping can be installed.

The writer has inspected works during wet periods and has noted that the existing drainage problems have not been aggravated.

SUMMARY

This contract has had a very thorough and comprehensive consultation process and achieves the aim of traffic calming and enhancement. Given another 12 months, the planting will be established and has been designed to provide seasonal colour. Once this planting is established it will be possible to remove the white posts located on the ends of the planters and also to relocate the road hump signs and posts to the footpath.

This should address the problem of ‘visual pollution’. Currently these extra posts etc are required to maximise the visibility of the planters at night.

City Streets have also been asked to plant additional trees in the planters. This can be considered again in the next planting season.

This project was originally initiated by residents and achieves the objectives set by them. Unfortunately, not all of the community is happy with the end result, but given time for the plant growth etc to occur as outlined above, I am confident the objective of streetscape enhancement will be met.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the information be received.
 2. That the works remain in place and are then reviewed in 12 months time.