

APPENDIX O

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 12 JANUARY 2010

EXECUTIVE - 2 FEBRUARY 2010

Title:

REVIEW OF GUILDFORD-CRANLEIGH RAIL LINK REOPENING

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Richard Gates]
[Wards Affected: All]**

Summary and purpose:

On 8 September 2009, ELOS agreed the scope of a review of the Guildford-Cranleigh Rail Link reopening.

The body of this report on the review into the feasibility and impact of the Association of Train Operating Companies' (ATOC) proposal to construct 7 miles of electrified track from Cranleigh to Peasmarsh Junction was considered by ELOS at its meeting on 12th January 2010 and its recommendation to the Executive is detailed at the end of the report.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

The improvement of sustainable forms of transport is an important factor in making Waverley a good place to live and contributes to the Council's priorities of Improving Lives and the Environment of the Borough.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

Improving public transport can increase the accessibility of parts of the borough to people with mobility problems and those without cars.

Resource/Value for Money implications:

There are no direct resource implications associated with this report other than the officer time involved in the review. There would be significant resource implications if Members decide to commission or contribute towards a feasibility study or funding for the Rail Link. However, the Council does not have a budget which could be used.

Legal Implications:

There are no direct legal implications.

Introduction

1. At its meeting on the 8 September 2009, the Committee agreed the terms of reference for its in-depth review of the Guildford-Cranleigh Rail Link reopening.
2. The review commenced with a special meeting of the Committee in Select Committee mode on 12 November 2009 where The Association of Train Operators (ATOC) presented the proposals and the Committee heard representations from the following:
 - Surrey County Council Waverley Local Committee
 - Bramley Parish Council
 - Waverley Cycle Forum
 - Rudgwick Parish Council
 - Open Spaces Society
 - Cranleigh Chamber of Commerce
 - Middleton Press
 - Friends of the Earth
3. The minutes of the meeting are attached as Annexe 1. The report considered by ELOS is included below and its recommendation to the Executive is detailed at the end of the report.

Background

4. The original Guildford to Horsham via Cranleigh line was opened in 1865 by London Brighton and South Coast Railway. It was a single track railway with passing loops. The line was never very profitable and the 1963 'Reshaping of British Railways' report indicated a flow of under 5,000 passengers per week. As a result the Guildford to Cranleigh line was closed in 1965. Since that time, Cranleigh's population has grown considerably and this justified investigation into its re-opening.
5. On 15 June 2009, The Association of Train Operators (ATOC) published a report called "Connecting Communities". This report suggested reopening a number of railway lines closed in the 1960s, as a way of allowing more people to access the rail network. One of the lines ATOC's report suggests considering reopening is the Guildford-Cranleigh line.
6. The rail link would involve the construction of seven miles of electrified track from Cranleigh to Peasmarsh Junction, approximately one mile south of Guildford station, where the branch line would join the existing main line railway. Train services would run every half an hour, and would be provided by extending existing London to Guildford via Cobham stopping services.

7. On 16th June, ELOS requested a review into the Guildford to Cranleigh Rail Link. A Scoping Report was submitted to the following meeting of ELOS on 8th September which agreed the focus and timetable for the review.
8. Officers from Waverley and Guildford Borough Councils and Surrey County Council met with Ben Condry from ATOC in October to share background information relating to the various studies carried out on the issue. It was acknowledged that ATOC had not involved Waverley, Guildford or Surrey County Council in the preparation of their report and had not seen all of the feasibility studies carried out by Surrey County Council in 1996/97. The reason given for this was that it was a high level study looking at schemes across the country. As a result, ATOC have now been given copies of these background studies by Surrey County Council.
9. A Select Committee meeting was held on 12th November 2009 with representatives from Waverley, Guildford, Surrey County Council, Parish Councils and other interested parties. The meeting consisted of a presentation by Ben Condry, Passenger Demand Forecasting Scheme Manager and Chris Austin, formerly Head of Public of Affairs at ATOC and author of the report on how the Guildford-Cranleigh link was selected. This was followed by a question and answer session with the ELOS Select Committee and invited parties. The notes of this meeting are attached at Annexe 1.
10. An initial site visit of the full route has been carried out by officers to identify potential planning and environmental constraints. A Members site visit of key sections of the route has been requested. It is suggested that this could focus on the A281 crossing near Shalford and potential station locations at Bramley and Cranleigh.
11. The BBC Politics Show included a report on the Guildford to Cranleigh Rail Link which aired on 29th November 2009 and featured interviews with ward member Cllr Maurice Byham and Peter Wadham from Bramley Parish Council.
12. The following report responds to the key questions raised by ELOS on 8th September 2009 and issues raised at the Select Committee meeting on 12th November.

How compatible is the proposal with Waverley planning policies?

13. The rail link would follow the route of the former Guildford to Cranleigh railway line, which has become established as a recreational route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders known as the Downs Link. This provision would be impacted if the line were reopened. The route is a long distance footpath, a bridleway and part of the National Cycle Network.
14. Waverley Local Plan Policies LT11 (Long Distance Footpaths) and M8 (Guildford to Cranleigh Movement Corridor) seek to safeguard, protect and enhance the use of the Downs Link by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. The ATOC report acknowledges that the path would need to be accommodated

alongside the line. While the route of the Rail Link has been safeguarded, it might be necessary to re-route the Downs Link.

15. The Downs Link follows the trackbed of the former single track railway which in places has steep embankments and cuttings either side. As a result, the level area can be as little as 4 to 5 metres and accommodating the Downs Link alongside would need to be at a different level or involve engineering works. At many points along the route the lower level would be at risk of flooding or close to the Wey and Arun Canal and there are numerous culverts under the path which could be affected.
16. The provision of a railway track and bridleway would require the removal of a large number of trees and vegetation. Policy D7 of the Local Plan resists development which would result in the loss of important trees or groups of trees or hedgerows.
17. The level of engineering works could also have a significant impact on biodiversity and in particular habitats of protected species. There are a number of badger setts along the route and evidence of bats and great crested newts. Policy D5 of the Local Plan and PPS9 (Biodiversity) also resist development that would materially harm a protected species or its habitat.
18. The majority of the route is within the Green Belt (Policy C1 of the Local Plan) while a small amount in Cranleigh and to the north lies within Countryside beyond the Green Belt (Policy C2 of the Local Plan). The railway line would not be inappropriate development provided it maintains the openness of the Green Belt. The section south of Bramley to Run Common is designated an Area of Great Landscape Value (Policy C3 of the Local Plan). The former station in Bramley is within a Conservation Area which would need to be taken into account in the design of any new buildings to comply with Policy HE8 of the Local Plan. The location of the former station in Cranleigh has been redeveloped into Stocklund Square shops and car park. A potential new station at Stocklund Square might involve land within Countryside beyond the Green Belt where development of new buildings would be resisted.
19. It is likely that any railway development would result in increased noise, vibration and visual impacts on adjoining properties, particularly in Cranleigh and Bramley if a train service were to be introduced, which could conflict with Policy D1 (Environmental Implications of Development) and Policy D2 (Compatibility of Uses) of the Local Plan. The loss of large stretches of trees and vegetation along the route would have a significant landscape impact and visual impact on properties which back onto the line.
20. The Environment Agency normally require a vegetated buffer zone of 5-8 metres between any structure and main rivers to allow movement of species between suitable habitats, and promote the expansion of biodiversity. An electrified railway would include security fencing on either side which could result in inadequate buffer zones to rivers along the route in conflict with PPS9 (Biodiversity).

Having looked at the methodology what were the key criteria missing from this analysis?

21. ATOC considered nine key factors when identifying where demand for better access might be met by new rail links. A key factor was a population of 15,000 with no rail connection located on closed railway lines. While this did not apply to Cranleigh, ATOC advised that “its good business case reflects the benefits of relieving traffic on congested local roads and of providing an alternative access to the railway, given that Guildford is already a busy station with finite car parking capacity”.
22. It then prepared a “high-level demand estimate” based on standard railway industry passenger demand forecasting tools, and comparisons with similar rail-served settlements in the local area. No details are provided in ATOC’s report as to how estimates of capital costs for schemes were arrived at, nor whether its research considered track or signalling improvements which might be needed on the wider rail network to accommodate these new services. Following questions at the Select Committee, ATOC have confirmed that a unit cost for reinstating the line of approx £6m/km includes relocating the path, and also for smaller structures such as minor bridge work and culverts although costs for major bridges and level crossings were separate.
23. ATOC confirmed that the “study has only established that a route is physically possible, and a detailed feasibility study would be required to ensure that the best route were chosen and to confirm that there was a good business case”. The report indicates that the cost of the scheme would be approximately £63m and the benefit:cost ratio would be 1:7. However, ATOC acknowledged at the Select Committee meeting that the final cost could be closer to £100m.
24. With regard to any feasibility study, a number of variables have changed although the key criteria would be the same. Therefore the format of the previous feasibility study would be appropriate which had the following subject headings:
 - a. Present Position
 - b. Reinstatement of Route
 - c. Environment
 - d. Operations and Train Planning
 - e. The Case for Heavy Rail or Light Rail
 - f. Costs
25. It was suggested at the Select Committee meeting that any feasibility study should look at the number of dwellings within ½ mile walk of possible station locations at Bramley and Cranleigh. The possibility of linking the Park & Ride at Arlington with the rail link was also suggested.

Subject to a good business case being made, what funding issues then arise and how would these be sourced?

26. The first issue would be the cost of a feasibility study and who would fund it. It is noted that Surrey County Council are the Local Transportation Authority and not Waverley Borough Council. The Feasibility Study in 1996 was

commissioned by Railtrack Major Projects Division Southern Group but was paid for by Surrey County Council. ATOC advised that their assumption was on a 60 year capital payback compared to 20 years in the 1996 study. ATOC have advised that a feasibility study could cost approximately £50-80,000.

27. Surrey County Council have confirmed that they would not fund another feasibility study or the cost of reopening the line although they would provide whatever assistance they can to any party that wishes to take forward such work. They make the point that at £63m, the project is roughly twice the size of the Guildford Major Hub Scheme and realistically would deliver benefits to far fewer residents. With no obvious promoter of the reopening scheme, Surrey County Council consider that spending taxpayers' money on revisiting earlier work seems of little value. The County's position is attached as Annexe 2.
28. Jonathan Lord from Surrey County Council Waverley Local Committee stated that the Rail Link had not yet been considered by the Local Committee but highlighted that it was unlikely that SCC would be able to help financially, but probably only in practical terms.
29. Waverley is in a similar position to Surrey County Council in that there is no budget and no expertise to undertake a feasibility study or to commission one. Even with a feasibility study, the funding requirement for the scheme would be a major obstacle and it is not clear where this might come from.
30. ATOC indicated that funding for a Rail Link could come from a partnership of Local Authority, County Council, Network Rail, SEEDA and private investment. The Department for Transport (DfT) has already fully allocated its budget for the rail network for the period from 2009-14. Therefore money to reopen the lines suggested by ATOC would have to be found elsewhere. The "Connecting Communities" report states that potential sources of funding include "fares income, the private sector, Regional Funding Allowance, PTE or local authority contribution, and Government rail funding in 2014-19".

What do local people and the various business communities think about the proposal?

31. The Select Committee on 12th November was an opportunity for representatives of interest groups to give their views.
32. A mix of views were expressed at the meeting. A number commented on the general benefit of improving the public transport connectivity between Cranleigh and Guildford and potentially reducing road traffic. There were, however, a number of concerns about the practical impact of the scheme.
33. Additional traffic was raised as an issue due to rail users driving to stations, particularly through the village crossroads in Bramley and Cranleigh. Another view was that the rail line could help alleviate problems within the villages because school children and commuters would come off the road and use the train as an alternative means of getting to work and schools and help reduce CO₂ emissions. The need for adequate parking and access to stations was highlighted. It was suggested that it could be advantageous to consider a

new station at Arlington Park and Ride as many people used this facility and could alleviate some of the issues of parking.

34. Concerns were also raised about the effect these proposals would have on the residents living close to and directly by the rail line and particularly about the preservation of the Downs Link. It was highlighted that there are at least four building incursions into the current Downs Link route. Concerns were also raised about the height of fencing required to separate electrified tracks from dogs and children using the Downs Link in close proximity. Concerns were also raised over the proximity of the railway for horses using the bridleway.
35. Significant concern was raised about the huge costs of funding such a project, although it was considered that cheaper alternatives such as improving the bus service, before turning to reopening the rail line.
36. It was suggested that the reopening of the rail line could help support local small businesses.
37. The resulting demand for housing development around Bramley and Cranleigh was seen as both positive and negative.
38. Any scheme should consider the needs of cyclists at stations to allow easy access onto the train and for safe and secure cycle storage at the stations and on trains themselves.
39. Peter Harris, representing Rudgwick Parish Council, reminded the Committee that the effect of the proposals extended further than Waverley.
40. A further concern was the affordability and speed of the rail line and it needed to be attractive to draw commuters away from using their cars. ATOC advised that they had worked on the cost of a return ticket at £5 to Guildford and £8.50 for longer journeys. Concern was raised that although this was similar to the cost of parking in Guildford, unless the railway offered a cheaper and faster service it would not attract commuters away from using their cars, especially if they also had to pay for limited parking at stations.
41. Light Rail was suggested as an alternative which would require less space, be far cheaper and have a less environmental impact than the current heavy rail proposals. ATOC advised that Light Rail had not been considered as part of the report but it was not currently technically possible to bring light rail onto the main railway line.
42. The point was made that it was important to recognise benefits which are not financial, such as the mitigating impact on climate change.

What are Waverley's views on ATOC's proposal?

43. Members at the ELOS Select Committee raised concern over the potential cost of the proposal, who would be expected to pay for it and who would champion it. Concern was also raised over the cost of an initial feasibility study. It was highlighted that the Local Transportation Authority is Surrey County Council, not Waverley Borough Council.

44. Concern was raised over the loss of the Downs Link and Members wanted assurance that both the rail line and Downs Link could run in parallel, although noting that in parts the Downslink Path may need to be rerouted.
45. Members felt that serious consideration needed to be given to the siting of stations, maybe even consider a new station, possibly two in Cranleigh close to central housing developments, to alleviate traffic in the centre of the village.
46. The importance of co-ordinating bus stops with railway stations and linking services was also stressed. ATOC confirmed that they would be working closely with the bus service to ensure good connectivity.

Look more in depth at the feasibility of the proposals (look not just at the technical aspect but issues such as the planning)

47. In terms of feasibility, it is not clear how the cost of the Rail Link would be funded and it would need one authority to champion the scheme. There may be additional costs regarding the provision of structures such as bridges, level crossings and earthworks along the route.
48. One of the key criteria is whether the route is physically possible within the ownership of Local Authorities. ATOC's view was that there was approximately 12 metres width along the length of the route which would allow for a single track rail and a bridleway alongside each other. Since the meeting, officers have conducted a site visit of the entire route and identified a number of areas where the width between private land is less than 12 metres. This includes areas in Bramley which are only 8 metres wide and bridges which have spans only 8 metres wide. There are many embankments and cuttings where the level area of land is only 4-5 metres. Placing the Downs Link path on level ground would either involve significant engineering works to raise ground levels or significant gradients and flood risk issues to route the path at lower level.
49. ATOC were asked whether or not there was a standard distance fence to fence required for an electric rail line. ATOC have since advised that the space for the train to pass (known as the kinematic envelope, a space that allows for some lateral movement of the vehicles on their suspension system) is just over three metres wide. Together with safety clearances to allow staff access to the lineside while trains are running, the normal requirement would be 4.8 metres between the fence lines and five metres would be a good general yardstick for planning.
50. Concerns were raised over traffic and parking with regard to commuters driving to the stations. In Bramley, there is no car park for the former station as the area has been redeveloped into Bramley Business Centre. Closing the B2128 Station Road for a level crossing would result in congestion which is likely to affect the Bramley crossroads which would be only 220 metres away. Likewise, in Cranleigh, the former station area is now the Stocklund Square car park which is already busy during the week. ATOC argued that the proposals would help to relieve traffic on the roads and car parking could be looked at in more detail as part of the feasibility study. The report assumed

using existing car parks. If parking at stations was a concern ATOC suggested that there could be nil parking.

51. ATOC are assuming 8 carriage trains whereas the SCC study in 1996/97 was based on 4 carriages. This is particularly important with regard to Bramley where the existing platform would not be long enough for 8 carriages and the land to the north of the platform has pinchpoints of only approximately 8 metres wide. Therefore some land acquisition may be required or the Downs Link would need to be re-routed. If more than one train an hour was to be considered then a passing point might be needed at Bramley which would be difficult to achieve because of the width restriction.

Review the information provided from Surrey CC

52. In 1994, Surrey County Council commissioned a study by Colin Buchanan and Partners to identify worthwhile new services and improvements which could be made to the rail infrastructure in Surrey to relieve pressure on the highway network and to encourage the use of rail services as part of a balanced transport system. A cost of £24 million was estimated for the base, civil, electrical and signal engineering works. It did not include land acquisition, legal costs and bridge works. As an example, an additional £750,000 was estimated to replace the missing bridge across the Wey. In the study preliminary economic analysis suggested that the reopening of the line would not be feasible. The first year income was estimated at only 3% of the capital cost, whereas British Rail traditionally required an 8% return to justify investment.
53. British Rail Projects carried out Stage 1 of a two part detailed study into the technical feasibility and potential for line reinstatement for the rail operator during early 1996 which was funded by Surrey County Council. This time, the cost of the scheme was estimated to be considerably less than originally anticipated, heavy rail at some £13.4 (+- 50%) if electrified and £11.1 m (+- 50%) for diesel operation. LRT (light rail) was estimated at £14.1 m (+- 50%). This was based on having a single track and an hourly service.
54. Stage 2 of the study looked in detail at the economic and environmental aspects of the proposal, such as how many people would use the new service. Concerns were raised about a number of issues, including:
 - potential pressures for major development in Cranleigh
 - whether the proposed hourly service would be attractive enough to provide a viable service
 - consider the impact on viability of existing bus routes
 - consider a park and ride alternative
 - demands for further car parking at Bramley and Cranleigh
 - consider more fully options other than heavy rail
 - consider light rail options going further into Guildford
55. Two scenarios were considered: either a hourly service or a half hourly service between Cranleigh and Guildford. The journey time would be 12 minutes compared to at least 25 minutes by car during the morning peak.

56. The study found that only 12% of trips made from the area were to Guildford or London, with 60% of the trips made to other parts of Surrey, many of which would not be accessed by reopening the line.
57. The main result of the research was that, despite the high levels of car use, the amount of trips transferring to rail would be very low. Few car users travelling during the interpeak would transfer to the new rail services, but many bus users would transfer; in fact between 8 and 9 times more bus users would convert to to use the rail than car users.
58. The study by British Rail Projects for Surrey County Council and Railtrack in April 1996 confirmed the engineering possibility of re-opening the line. The total cost of the work was calculated at £14.24 million. A subsequent study of the business case completed in 1997 concluded that forecast patronage and revenue would not provide sufficient return to cover the capital cost of the project. However, it was also concluded that the route should be protected from development .

Expanding the potential user groups that need to be asked about the proposals, eg. the schools within the catchment area

59. Specific schools have not been involved in the consultation process to date. Surrey County Council Education Section were invited to the Select Committee Meeting but did not attend.
60. Other potential user groups who attended the Select Committee meeting included the Waverley Cycle Forum and Cranleigh Chamber of Commerce.

What effect will the proposals have on other stations and facilities along the lines?

61. The expectation is to reduce pressure on car parks at Guildford Station. Signalling works would be required for the line to rejoin the main line at Peasmarsh. One suggestion was to create a new station at the Arlington Park and Ride. There are other former stations south of Cranleigh, eg. Rudgwick and south to Shoreham. It is not proposed that further train stations would be reopened.

Conclusions

62. The feasibility of re-opening the Guildford to Cranleigh Rail Link was considered by Surrey County Council in 1996/97 and the conclusion was that it was physically possible but that it was not economically viable. The proposal by the Association of Train Operating Companies confirms that it is still considered to be physically possible. They advise that a feasibility study may come to a different conclusion today because no new rolling stock would be required and the payback period for capital investment would be over a longer period. A feasibility study would involve significant cost and no authority has identified that they have funding in place to carry out such a study.

63. Concerns are also raised over the ability to provide a rail link and replacement Downs Link alongside each other without significant environmental impact or re-routing. There are a number of engineering obstacles to the proposal particularly the location of new stations at Bramley and Cranleigh.

Observations from ELOS

64. The Committee considered the report at its meeting on 12th January and made the following observations:

It considered the principle of a new rail-link between Cranleigh and Guildford and noting the significant financial cost and the other issues noted below and RECOMMEND to the Executive that, at this stage, and based on the information provided, the Council does not pursue further investigation into the re-opening of the rail-link.

1. The Committee agreed that there was little possibility of being able to finance the next step, the completion of a feasibility study, unless substantial funding from external partners was provided.
2. There was concern about being to provide adequate car parking around the stations for this proposal to go ahead.
3. The Committee questioned the financial viability of the scheme.
4. Some Members also questioned whether the new line would help local businesses in Cranleigh and Bramley as residents might be more likely to travel to Guildford and London to shop if accessibility to Guildford was improved.
5. There was concern that the new rail link might not provide adequate links with other local transport providers, specifically the buses.
6. Members also questioned if the views of residents had been taken account, since there seemed to have been undue focus on the financial aspects of the scheme.
7. In relation to these proposals, some Members raised the importance of the LDF and achieving sustainability within the Towns and Villages and felt that this re-opening proposal, if it were possible, should be considered as part of this process.
8. The Committee did not feel that the proposal should be dismissed in its entirety because of the positive opportunities it could bring to this area of the Borough. Furthermore, it was noted from the report, that, if funding was available, obstacles in building the line could be overcome. It was also recognised, however, that any further consideration would have to look at not just the financial aspect but also the potential impact on local communities.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive:

1. accept the ELOS recommendation that the Council does not pursue further investigation into the reopening of the rail link and agrees that Waverley is not in any position to fund the capital costs of the reopening;

2. Agree that the Council will give whatever assistance it can to any party who wishes to take forward such work; and
3. Agree that the Council will continue to work with Surrey County Council to protect and develop the Downs Link as a sustainable transport corridor.

Background Papers (SD(E))

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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