

**Report to:** Lead Member for Transport and Environment

**Date of meeting:** 16 January 2023

**By:** Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

**Title:** London Road Corridor Improvements - Phase 2 - Buckhurst Place

**Purpose:** To consider the proposed way forward in relation to the Town Hall Square (Buckhurst Place) element of the Bexhill-on-Sea London Road Corridor scheme and seek approval to progress the scheme to detailed design and construction.

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***RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:***

- (1) Note the comments of the local consultation and subsequent discussions with Rother District Council regarding the inter-relationship between the Town Hall Square proposals and the District Council's Town Hall campus redevelopment proposals; and;**
  - (2) Approve that Option A – removal of the Town Hall Square gyratory and creation of a priority junction between London Road and Buckhurst Place - to be taken forward to detailed design and construction as part of the 2023/24 Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements**
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## **1. Background**

1.1. The Hastings and Bexhill Movement and Access Package comprises a package of pedestrian, cycle and public transport improvement schemes across Bexhill, Hastings and St Leonards. One of the identified schemes within the package approved by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) is the London Road Traffic Management and Public Realm scheme in Bexhill with a focus on improving the pedestrian environment, including the public realm, and traffic management in the area.

1.2. The extent of the scheme is from its junction with the A259 and running south to and including its junction with Buckhurst Place including the one-way gyratory outside Bexhill Town Hall. The extent of the scheme also goes beyond London Road to include Buckhurst Place and part of Sackville Road to its junction with Western Road. The overall extent of the study area is illustrated in Appendix 1.

1.3. Funding for the works identified in the scheme would be funded by the Local Growth Fund monies secured from Government through the SELEP as well as from £300,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy secured from Rother District Council (RDC). The scheme will be added to the county's highway asset register and the ongoing maintenance costs will be included in the County Council's future highway maintenance programme.

1.4. The outcomes of the consultation on the overall scheme and recommended next steps were considered by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment at a decision making meeting on 21 February 2022, where the Lead Member resolved to:

- Agree that all elements of the scheme except the Phase 2 - Buckhurst Place/Town Hall Square options are taken forward to detailed design and construction as part of the Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements; and
- Agree that a recommended way forward for Phase 2 - Buckhurst Place options is presented back to the Lead Member following further discussions with Rother District Council, Bexhill Town Council and other stakeholders.

Since the February 2022 decision making meeting, further discussions have been held with Rother District Council on the interface of the Buckhurst Place options and their proposals for redeveloping the Town Hall campus In Bexhill.

## 2. Additional Information

### *Town Hall Square scheme proposals*

2.1 Two options were presented during the 2021 consultation for improvements to the public realm and traffic management to the current one way gyratory outside Bexhill Town Hall:

- Option A – Remove gyratory and create priority junction between London Road and Buckhurst Place (Appendix 2)
  - creation of a larger and enhanced public space outside the Town Hall
  - relocating bus stops to London Road and Buckhurst Place, a new zebra crossing facility on Buckhurst Place and new cycle parking facilities
  - provision of new loading bays on Station Road and London Road; 3 taxi bays (a reduction of up to 4 spaces) and 17 general parking bays (a loss of around 17 spaces)
- Option B - retain the current gyratory arrangement around Town Hall Square (Appendix 3)
  - upgrade existing bus stops
  - introduce a new raised zebra crossing at the southern end of London Road and new cycle parking facilities
  - kerb works around junctions will help to slow down traffic and reduced crossing distances will allow pedestrians to cross more safely
  - provision for 7 taxi bays and 23 general parking spaces (a loss of 11 spaces)

2.2 From the public consultation (Appendix 4), there was no overall preference amongst respondents between the two options put forward.

Scheme	Support	Issues & Concerns	Neutral/Unknown
Option A – remove gyratory and create T-junction	40%	53%	7%
Option B – retain existing gyratory	41%	47%	12%

### *Bexhill Town Hall redevelopment proposals*

2.3 Over the last 12 months, Rother District Council have been developing proposals in parallel for the redevelopment of the Town Hall campus in Bexhill. The proposals comprise the creation of a new civic centre providing meeting areas, employment space for businesses and a café, as well as the refurbishment of the Town Hall.

2.4 Following the February 2022 Lead Member meeting, officers have been discussing with Rother District Council the inter-relationship between the proposed Town Hall redevelopment and the Town Hall Square proposals. In seeking to provide an improved setting for the Town Hall and its surrounds, Rother have focussed their design around the removal of the gyratory at Bexhill Town Hall Square (Option A) which would then create a public space outside the Town Hall and new Civic Centre.

2.5 The Town Hall campus redevelopment proposals were submitted as a planning application in August 2022. Rother District Council's Planning Committee refused the application in October 2022 on design grounds, but it is expected that the District Council will resubmit revised proposals in due course.

2.6 The proposals to remove the Town Hall Square gyratory are designed as such to work whether the Town Hall campus is redeveloped or not. On that basis, it is recommended that the Option A proposal, to remove the existing gyratory and introduce a priority junction between London Road and Buckhurst Place, is taken forward to detailed design and construction. The local County Councillor, Councillor Hollidge, is supportive of the Option A proposal. The proposed scheme will look to be constructed in accordance with the proposed refurbishment of the Town Hall building, with all materials being selected to complement and enhance the overall heritage setting.

#### *Equalities and Carbon emissions*

2.7 The scheme will help to reduce carbon emissions by providing an improved less car dominated environment in this part of Bexhill town centre which will seek to encourage shorter journeys, which otherwise might have been undertaken by car, to be undertaken by non-motorised modes.

2.8 The design of the scheme has considered equalities characteristics and an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been carried out for the proposals (Appendix 5). The EqIA is a live document and will continue to be reviewed and updated during the detailed design and construction stages, ensuring any issues that arise are addressed.

### **3. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

3.1. The London Road corridor scheme forms part of the wider Hastings Bexhill Movement and Access Package and seeks to improve the pedestrian environment, including the public realm, and traffic management in this part of Bexhill. The scheme would be delivered using Local Growth Fund monies, as well as £300,000 Community Infrastructure Levy funding from Rother District Council.

3.2. Following the Lead Member for Transport and Environment decision making meeting in February 2022 on the consultation outcomes of the wider London Road corridor scheme, further discussions have been held with Rother District Council about the proposals for Town Hall Square and the inter-relationship with the District Council's plans redeveloping the Town Hall campus in Bexhill. Rother District Council's proposals for the Town Hall and its surrounds have been focussed on the creation of a public space and improving the setting of their site which will be achieved by the removal of the existing Town Hall Square gyratory and the creation of a priority junction between London Road and Buckhurst Place. This was option A for the Town Hall Square which was consulted upon as part of the wider London Road proposals in November/December 2021.

3.3 Whilst the removal of the gyratory received a mixed response during the public consultation, it will deliver an attractive public realm that will provide a safe space for people to meet, encouraging people to come into the town more often and spend more time there. As an important building and community hub in the town, the function and appearance of the area outside the Town Hall and its surrounds is crucial for the future vibrancy and commercial success of the site's potential redevelopment and the town centre as a whole.

3.4 Therefore, it is recommended that Option A, the removal of the Town Hall Square gyratory is approved and that the scheme is taken forward to detailed design and construction through the Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements.

#### **RUPERT CLUBB**

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Hollidge.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None