Queensway Gateway consultation report

Summary of consultation for the proposed Queensway Gateway scheme from Sea Change Sussex

1 October 2014
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Planning Forum meeting
1. Introduction

We have undertaken consultation of the community in advance of Sea Change Sussex’s submission of a planning application for the Queensway Gateway road scheme.

This consultation focused on:

- Outlining Sea Change’s proposals for the Queensway Gateway road
- Explaining the rationale for the road – to provide access to business development land and so support job creation
- Indicating what the future business sites could be like, with associated landscaping
- Explaining the expected impact on local traffic flows
- Answering people’s questions
- Listening to their views and concerns

The project team is reviewing the proposals in the light of the consultation findings and making appropriate alterations.

2. Consultation objectives

Our objectives for the consultation were two-fold:

- To raise awareness of the proposals for the Queensway Gateway and Sea Change’s intentions to develop associated employment schemes longer term
- To seek constructive comments to inform the planning application proposals and East Sussex County Council’s proposed alterations to Maplehurst Road

3. Audiences

We identified the most relevant audiences to consult as:

1. Residents living near the road site
2. Nearby businesses
3. Residents of Maplehurst Road
4. Local councillors

4. Consultation format

Our consultation comprised:

4.1. A drop-in event for Maplehurst Road residents:

We sent an invitation to a consultation session to residents of Maplehurst and several of the smaller nearby residential roads.

The session was a drop-in event from 6.30pm to 8.30pm at Baldslow Village Memorial Hall on Monday 15 September. Approximately 40 people attended.
The main message we were there to convey was that development of the Queensway Gateway would provide the opportunity to address the dangerous rat-run Maplehurst Road has become by closing the road to through-traffic.

We displayed the materials in Appendix 3 to explain the proposals: an overview map showing Sea Change’s economic development projects for East Sussex; a diagram of the proposed Queensway Gateway road; a drawing of the associated business sites with landscaping; and an illustration of possible changes to Maplehurst Road.

We may hold another meeting for these residents when more detailed proposals for Maplehurst Road have been developed based on views conveyed at the first session.

4.2. Councillor meetings:
On 23 September, Sea Change briefed councillors on the proposals, responded to their questions and listened to their views. Attending the session at the Sussex Exchange were Cllrs John Hodges, Bruce Dowling, Liam Atkins, Dominic Sabetian, Kim Forward and Peter Pragnell.

Sea Change also separately briefed Cllr Michael Edwards.

A brief summary of discussion at these meetings is included in Appendix 1.

4.3. Planning Forum meeting:
We presented the proposals to approximately 35 local residents, business people and councillors on the evening of Wednesday 24 September at the Stade Hall in Hastings.

Hastings Borough Council invited all nearby residents which it considered to be affected by the development.

Chaired by Cllr Kim Forward and following Hastings Borough Council’s usual format for Planning Forum meetings, this session comprised a presentation by the Sea Change team as the developer followed by responses to questions from representatives of local groups and from councillors on behalf of local people.

There was also an opportunity for people to look at the drawings on display boards and discuss them informally with the Sea Change team, councillors and each other – and to leave written feedback at the end. We invited people to send any follow up views or questions via email after the event.

Full notes from this session are in Appendix 2.

4.4. Web site information:
We published the proposals presented at the Planning Forum on Sea Change’s web site (www.seachangesussex.co.uk) for people who were unable to attend the session or who wanted to study the scheme afterwards.

4.5. Media briefing:
We briefed the Hastings Observer on the road proposals and the consultation exercise and provided the scheme drawings.
5. **Summary of views expressed**

We heard a good range of comments and questions during the consultation process. On balance, people were positive about the proposals. Where concerns were raised, most related to perceived increased inconvenience. Some people raised detailed issues relating to their specific businesses or homes.

Most of the comments fell into the following themes.

### 5.1 Approval of the job creation objective

Residents, business people and councillors were generally supportive of the job creation purpose of the road. Nobody disagreed with the need to provide more employment to support the community over the next 20 years.

### 5.2 Positive response from residents of Maplehurst Road

The residents strongly agreed that the road is a dangerous rat-run and so they generally welcomed proposals to close it at one end. There were, however, opposing views about which end it would be best to close, with roughly equal numbers favouring the north and south ends.

People questioned how emergency access to the road would be provided for.

### 5.3 Positive reception to impact on traffic on small local roads

Most people appreciated that the new road would benefit small residential roads that currently experience too much traffic.

### 5.4 Some objections to closing Maplehurst Road to through-traffic

While most Maplehurst Road residents approved of the idea of closing one end and many others could see the safety case, some who regularly use the road as a cut-through were more concerned with the inconvenience it would cause them.

### 5.5 Pedestrian and cycle access

There were many requests for Junction Road to be kept open for pedestrian and cycle access even if it is closed to vehicles. This would enable people on Sedlescombe Road North to reach the hospital – and people living on The Ridge to reach Sainsbury’s - on foot or by bike without having to use the longer loop of the new Queensway Gateway.

Residents of The Ridge also asked if a pedestrian crossing could be created to aid access to Sainsbury’s.

### 5.5 Concerns about the time gap between the opening of the Link Road and the Queensway Gateway

Several people were concerned about congestion levels on The Ridge after the Link Road is open and before the Queensway Gateway is open – which could be around a year.
5.6 Dislike of plans to close Junction Road and the associated longer travel ‘loop’ needed to head eastwards on The Ridge

Some acknowledged that this would be outweighed by improvements in safety and traffic flow. Others did not.

A number of people struggled to understand the safety reasons why Junction Road would need to be closed if a roundabout connecting to the Queensway Gateway was created nearby. Some complained about ‘having to go to the moon’ around the longer loop.

5.7 Importance of the environment

Several people emphasised how important they felt the landscaping is to them and asked detailed questions about the proposed landscape plan. They urged Sea Change to retain as many of the native trees as possible and to ensure good screening of the road and business sites.

Some asked questions about wildlife in the area and the findings of Sea Change’s ecological investigations.

5.8 Concerns about parking

Some residents of Sedlescombe Road North were concerned about parking outside their homes, both while construction is under way and longer term.

5.9 Specific points of detail

Some raised points of detail that related directly to them – such as Rambler Coaches who were concerned that access for coaches to turn into their yard could be restricted.

These points are being examined by the project team.

Planning Forum meeting
Appendix 1: Summary of councillor feedback

The councillors’ views in the consultations meetings were overwhelmingly positive. They supported the scheme for the access it would provide to the employment land and for being a key element in a package of measures to improve the traffic flows in the area, particularly on The Ridge.

They expressed some concerns about the possible closure of Junction Road. They raised queries about some technical aspects of the scheme – namely:

- What is the blue area shown on the drawing? It is a proposed attenuation pond to collect surface water run-off from the road.
- What happens to the footpath from the A21 to Beauharrow Rd? It would be integrated into the road footpath.

The councillors also raised questions about:

- the closure of Maplehurst Road (e.g. which end, which is not yet decided)
- the timeline for the development
- the sources of the traffic figures used (East Sussex County Council’s model).
Appendix 2: Notes from Planning Forum, 23 September

The Forum was chaired by Cllr Kim Forward who introduced the session and welcomed the attendees. The presentation slides shown by Sea Change are in Appendix 2.

Presentations

Sam Batchelor, a planning officer from Hastings Borough Council, explained the background to the site in question. He said the land either side of the proposed road has long been allocated for business development in Hastings’ Local Plan. A new Local Plan is being created which would confirm and enlarge this business zone. He said the Council had asked Sea Change to consider various matters in creating its proposals including traffic, road design, neighbourhood impact, the environment and archaeology.

John Shaw, CEO of Sea Change Sussex, presented a map of Hastings and Bexhill indicating Sea Change’s range of projects. He explained the company’s goal to create an ‘employment corridor’ stretching from the A21 down Queensway and the Link Road to north-east Bexhill. He talked about creating sites for employment to support the community over the next 20 years. He stressed that Sea Change aims to be a friendly developer, creating the best possible schemes and taking into account the planning considerations Sam had highlighted.

Simon Boots, an engineer on Sea Change’s team, showed an outline of the proposed road and highlighted the main features.

Landscape architect Gary Thorogood-Page showed an indicative masterplan of possible future business sites and the proposed landscaping to screen these sites and the road.

Transport consultant Thaddaeus O’Higgins showed a diagram illustrating the expected impact of the proposed road on local traffic flows, as found from traffic modelling studies. He explained that the road should have a positive effect in diverting traffic away from small local roads to more appropriate routes. It should also relieve a congestion pinch point along a section of The Ridge.

Questions

Cllr Forward invited questions from representatives of local groups. Only one had requested to speak – Aubrey Ingleton from Hastings & St Leonards Seniors’ Forum (www.hssf.org.uk).

He said he had many concerns. The proposed road would make his journey time longer. He was concerned it would make journeys more difficult for people travelling from Eastbourne to the Conquest Hospital.

He objected to the suggestion of closing Maplehurst Road at one end as he felt there was no problem with a few cars using it as a cut-through: it has been used as such for a long time and the residents are used to it. He asked if the business sites being discussed were additional to those already in the Local Plan.

Sam Batchelor responded that the sites were not additional. John Shaw explained that the proposed road should make it easier for people from Eastbourne to access the hospital: they would travel up the Link Road from Bexhill, then up Queensway and on to the section of The Ridge which should have reduced congestion.
John disagreed about Maplehurst Road: it is a dangerous rat-run. He said the roundabout junctions proposed as part of the Queensway Gateway would enable traffic to turn easier than the current right hand turns into Junction Road. He acknowledged that travelling from the A21 and heading eastwards on The Ridge would need drivers to follow a slightly longer loop but believed the safety and congestion gains outweigh this.

Cllr Forward then invited the audience to look more closely at the proposals on the display boards and relay their questions and comments through the councillors present.

**Cllr Peter Pragnell:**

Cllr Pragnell posed the following questions on behalf of local people:

*How will Rambler Coaches be able to access their yard?*

Sea Change said they would take a close look at that to avoid any problems.

*Does Sea Change own the land?*

Most of the land is owned by Hastings Borough and East Sussex County councils – both of which are keen to see the land developed for employment use. Some parts of the land are privately owned with Sea Change in discussions with these owners.

*During development work, where will construction vehicles park and will this cause a nuisance?*

Construction would be carried out west to east to minimise disruption to residents on the Sedlescombe Road side. There would be a six to eight week period near the end to ‘break through’ to Sedlescombe Road North. The construction firm appointed would need to ensure it minimises inconvenience to neighbours.

Cllr Pragnell also presented his own views as follows:

Maplehurst Road residents suffer severely from the road being used as a cut-through, especially by lorries. They do not view it as ‘just a few cars’.

If a few minor issues could be sorted out, he feels the scheme would be an excellent project - the sooner delivered the better. The proposed roundabouts would work well.

**Cllr John Hodges:**

*What are the advantages of the proposed scheme?*

Cllr Hodges gave his own response. He felt there were many advantages. The town is crying out for the jobs the scheme would support. It would provide a more appropriate way to get on to the A21 to London. It would improve journeys eastwards to Rye and the Channel ports. Signage will be important to make these routes clear. The roundabouts would alleviate the congestion caused by traffic turning into Junction Road.

*Who would pay for the road?*

The funding would come from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership.
Cllr Matthew Lock:
Cllr Lock welcomed the way the road would alleviate traffic on The Ridge, although he felt closing Maplehurst Road to through-traffic could cause some inconvenience.

*If Junction Road is closed to traffic, could it still be used for pedestrian and cycle access e.g. to the Hospital?*

Sea Change replied that it probably could be.

*Have detailed road markings been planned as yet?*

This would be part of the detailed design work to follow and would be subject to East Sussex County Council’s approval as the highways authority.

*How much longer would the road make some journeys?*

It would add slightly to the length of journeys but this would be balanced by improved safety and better flowing traffic.

*Is there was an estimate of the number of jobs the business sites could support?*

Sea Change’s assessment indicates 1,370.

**Other questions & comments:**

Aubrey from the Seniors’ Forum asked why the meeting had not been advertised and why there was not a package of information to take away.

Sam Batchelor said a press release had been issued about the meeting. Sea Change said it would put the information on its web site from the next morning and would email it directly to anyone who asked for it.

Cllr Forward asked how the road would reduce the traffic on Harrow Lane. Sea Change replied this was because the new road would provide a better way to get on to The Ridge.

An audience member said the most important points would be “signage, signage and signage.” He felt that local road signage has traditionally been poorly organised.

**Close**

The formal part of the meeting ended. Cllr Forward encouraged people to leave written comments on paper: three people did. Sam Batchelor handed out business cards for Tariq Khwaja from TK Associates for people to get in touch with further views and questions if they wished.

Some local people stayed for a while to look further at the display information and talk to the Sea Change team.

The session ended at 8.30pm.
Appendix 3: Information shown at consultation sessions & on Sea Change web site

*Map showing range of Sea Change Sussex development projects:*
Diagram illustrating proposed Queensway Gateway road:
Queensway Gateway landscaping masterplan:

- Infill native tree planting along the northern boundary.
- Existing woodland retained and integrated with infill tree planting.
- Existing woodland retained and connected via additional infill planting.
- Direct pedestrian route of Way through woodland connecting existing routes located to the north and south of the site.
- Shared 3m Cycleway/Footpath bounded by 3m verge connecting to existing Public Rights of Way.
- Potential works for Salisbury’s.
- Creation of collecting foliage, network planting access to central areas and providing recreational opportunities.
- Drainage ditch enhanced with native woodland planting.
- Culvert to incorporate badge shell and dormouse tunnel to facilitate migration across the site.
- Biotic corridor.
- Notes: All planting to the road will be set out to ensure appropriate sight lines are achieved. Planting shown is strategic indicative at this stage.
- Fat boots to be provided in suitable identified areas in existing and proposed woodland plantings once identified.
- All proposed native species planting to include understorey and to be designed and structured to function as replacement domestic habitats.
- Dead wood and brash to be retained and used in the creation of hiber, tranquil and seclusion.
- Species used in proposed new plantings to be chosen to provide bird-habitat and sympathetic diversity naturally.

For specific details of ecological mitigation measures please refer to the Environmental Statement.
Drawing illustrating expected impact on local traffic flows:
Additional drawing shown at Maplehurst Road session: