

## Look left, look right... where's the money come from?

You may have noticed the new zebra crossing opposite the public toilet in Silver Street. Was it put there to help people in a hurry to relieve themselves?

The answer is **NO**: it is part of a strategy to make Silver Street easier to negotiate, and as a sop to pedestrians, during the 18-24 month phase of destruction and re-construction of Cofferridge Close, which will involve thousands of HGV trips, carting away the rubble and trees to landfill, and bringing in new construction materials. As part of this strategy, Barton Willmore, acting for owners CBRE, have also been putting pressure on MKC officers to introduce a partial one-way system in Silver Street, between Horsefair Green and the entrance to the Close. They wanted this, and the zebra crossing, in place before their Planning Application is determined, to address the knotty traffic congestion problems in Silver Street that will be exacerbated by their supermarket development. It will also make it easier for their contractors' 8 daily HGV supermarket delivery vehicles to get in and out of the Close (from the current 2 daily deliveries).



Following a Freedom of Information request, we learn, from emails between MKC officers and Barton Willmore and their traffic consultants WSP, that funding was offered **before** the relevant planning application comes before the Development Control Committee. Do we conclude from this that MKC already 'given the nod' to the Application, even before it has been considered by our elected representatives? And without the consent of Stony Stratford Town Council (who have already formally objected to the proposed one-way scheme)? It looks as if the applicant is trying to alter the town's traffic system to fit their supermarket development, but, importantly without the Town knowing. In case you've forgotten, the mission statement of Barton Willmore, is "... we consult with communities". Doesn't this make you angry?

*Read more about the email exchanges ...*

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In the emails, which go back to June 2011 (*see below*), the applicant suggests they will fund traffic changes "immediately" - before permission is granted if it would help to speed up the planning process. This is confirmed in an e-mail of 15 September 2011. The applicant says they will fund the legal procedure and implementation of these new restrictions immediately in order to speed up the process and to ensure that the restrictions are in place before planning permission has been granted.

The agent for the owners of Cofferridge Close asks the Council what is the cost of funding measures such as the zebra crossing in Silver St, and making the section of Silver Street/Horsefair Green one-way westbound from Calverton Road to Cofferridge Close. MKC replied that the cost of traffic orders for Silver St will be £5000.

Designing a town traffic system should be for a whole town not looking at a small part for a private developer as a way of easing their development. This might all be par for the course for major planning applications involving knotty traffic issues but the lack of transparency towards SSTC and townspeople as to the impetus for these traffic measures can only be described as deliberate.

Behind this is Section 106 money: a payment to a community to offset the impact of development, for example increased traffic. It's like a bribe but legal. It is meant to be proportionate to the value the private developer will gain from their development. A way of paying back the community for the grief they will inflict on it. But what is surprising is that it can be offered to smooth the way BEFORE the application has been decided, as seems to be the case here.

Detailed 106 negotiations between MKC and Barton Willmore and their traffic consultants WSP have clearly been going on BEFORE the planning application has even come before our elected representatives, as can be seen from the email extracts and meeting notes below, obtained as a result of a Freedom of Information request...

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### ***EXTRACTS from the relevant email and meeting minutes....***

#### **1) email from MKC to WSP 27/06/11**

I note your offer for the development to fund the pedestrian crossing of Silver Street if this is shown to be necessary through the parking study carried out under instruction by Richard Duffill. By way of this email I ask Richard to come back to you with the evidence for this.

#### **2) email MKC to WSP 08/08/11**

I confirm this authority's requirement for a pedestrian crossing of Silver Street.

#### **3) email MKC to WSP 11/08/11**

AS to confirm likely cost and timescale of undertaking necessary TRO procedures and implementation of additional double yellow line waiting restrictions in Silver Street and Horsefair Green.

#### **4) e mail MKC to WSP 18/08/11**

I have been advised that the cost of the traffic Orders for Silver Street will be £5000. As advised at our recent meeting a decision on the Orders is unlikely before Christmas/New Year.

#### **5) e mail from MKC to WSP 18/11/11**

Additional waiting restrictions in Silver Street and Horsefair Green. – WSP submitted revised parking plan with letter dated 16 August 2011, and confirmed in an e-mail of 15 September that the applicant would fund the legal procedure and implementation of these new restrictions immediately in order to speed up the process and to ensure that the restrictions were in place before planning permission had been granted. Richard Duffill issued an e-mail on 25 October stating that MK are not planning any changes to waiting restrictions in Silver Street and Horsefair Green until April/May 2012! Richard has not responded to any of my e-mails or phone messages since then! - AS discuss with RD in advance of meeting on 21 November, which will be attended by both.

#### **6) Meeting notes 1/12/11**

##### **Implementation of Waiting Restrictions in Silver Street, and Horsefair Green**

- MKC (RD) confirmed that there had been discussions with Stony Stratford Town Council, and they were opposed to the introduction of additional waiting restrictions. As a result, MKC are now proposing to introduce an experimental traffic order making the section of Silver Street/Horsefair Green one-way westbound from Calverton Road to Cofferridge Close. This should overcome the existing problem of congestion, and will be introduced together with the new pedestrian crossing in Silver Street at around the end of January 2012. The timing of the implementation of these traffic management measures are critical to the timing of the consideration of the proposed planning application. It is anticipated that the application will be considered at Committee around June 2012, by which time the traffic management scheme will have been in place for a number of months, and therefore it will be clear as to the success of the measures in relieving the existing congestion. If the experimental traffic management measures prove to be successful then the Traffic Regulation Order can be approved by Milton Keynes Council.

**It was agreed at the meeting that the one-way working would ease the congestion in Silver Street and Horsefair Green, and that this could be assessed in February/March 2012, at which time the highway holding objection would be removed.**

##### **Point 7 from notes of a meeting between BW, WSP and MKC on 15/03/12 (SB is Parking Strategy and Implementation Manager MKC) : PROGRESS OF TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT MEASURES IN SILVER STREET AND HORSEFAIR GREEN**

7. SB advised that there has been a delay to these works due to issues with the diversion route