

## Gravesham Borough Council

**Report to:** Joint Transportation Board  
**Date:** 16<sup>th</sup> December 2009  
**Reporting officer:** Head of Transport and Development  
**Subject:** Northfleet – Ebbsfleet station pedestrian links

### **Purpose and summary of report:**

This report is to inform Members about plans to improve pedestrian links between Northfleet and Ebbsfleet station.

### **Recommendations:**

This report is for information only.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 As many Members will be aware, pedestrian links between Ebbsfleet station and Northfleet are currently inadequate. In particular the routes are unnecessarily lengthy, there are no direction signs and there is a lack of dropped kerbs for people with mobility problems.
- 1.2 The most direct pedestrian route from Ebbsfleet station to Northfleet is via the northern station car park and the footway of Thames Way. This is shown as route A on the map in Appendix A.
- 1.3 Using this route, the distance from Ebbsfleet station to Northfleet station is just over 1000 metres, compared with a direct distance of 305 metres “as the crow flies.”
- 1.4 Anyone with mobility problems is likely to experience problems in Railway Street where there is a steep gradient and a lack of dropped kerbs.
- 1.5 Between Ebbsfleet station and Thames Way there are additional problems. At the present time there is no footway within the northern station car park, and no footway out of the car park, so pedestrians need to walk on the carriageway or on the grass verge where this is present. Disabled people in wheelchairs or scooters are unable to use this route unless they have some means of opening the car park barriers.
- 1.6 The issues considered in this report are not only inconvenient for Northfleet residents. The lack of proper link between Northfleet and Ebbsfleet stations

creates problems for passengers needing to change between trains, for example passengers from Bexley, Sidcup, Crayford etc who need to catch a Eurostar service.

## **2. Proposed future link from Northfleet station to Ebbsfleet station**

- 2.1 The issue of a Northfleet – Ebbsfleet link was raised at the Select Committee stage of the Channel Tunnel Link Act in 1995, and at various times since. It is not just about linking two railway stations, but also helping rail passengers from the west to access Ebbsfleet jobs, and joining the two communities as it is intended to be a fully accessible public link. In the current spending round a notional allocation of £5m was assigned from the Government's Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF).
- 2.2 The Transport Strategy for Ebbsfleet "Station Quarter Northfleet and Northfleet Rise", prepared for Land Securities in 2008, envisages a pedestrian / cycle link from Ebbsfleet station to Northfleet station taking the straight line route between the two stations. This is shown as route B on the map in Appendix A. The majority of this route would be across land controlled by Land Securities. The draft Kent Route Utilisation Study from Network Rail has identified this as a missing link, which opened up the possibility of bidding for funds from them.
- 2.3 On the basis of the potential CIF funding, Kent County Council commissioned Jacobs to produce a report outlining how this link could cross under or over the "North Kent" railway at Northfleet station and connect to Station Road. The new link was assumed to be constructed at the same time as the rebuilding of Northfleet station. There is a small allocation in the National Station Improvement Programme for improving Northfleet station.
- 2.4 The Jacobs report estimated that the cost of rebuilding the station and constructing a pedestrian underpass from Station Road to Thames Way would be in the region of £9 million pounds. The report further estimates that the alternative of a bridge would be somewhat more, although this was not analysed in detail because it was understood that Land Securities as landowner objected to this option and the proximity of the high-level walkway to their proposed development at Thames Way.
- 2.5 The Homes and Community Agency have now advised that the CIF funds for the Thames Gateway are over-programmed and, as the Northfleet scheme was ranked as a relatively low priority, it would be very unlikely to receive funding.
- 2.6 As there is little realistic chance of finding alternative funding at the present time, this scheme is now effectively dormant.

## **3. Other proposed Northfleet – Ebbsfleet link: Footpath NU7A/3**

- 3.1 Footpaths NU7A/3 and NU7A/2 form a route from Ebbsfleet Walk to Thames Way, passing under the "North Kent" railway line at the entrance to Northfleet Cement Works site. This route is narrow and unlit, with several steps and a gradient steeper than the maximum acceptable for disabled pedestrians.

- 3.2 As this path extends only as far as Thames Way it does not at present form a useful route to Ebbsfleet station. To use this route to walk from Northfleet station to Ebbsfleet station by continuing east along Thames Way and then via A2260 Ebbsfleet Gateway is more than 1.3 kilometres.
- 3.3 When Land Securities build their Ebbsfleet development it has been proposed they should construct a new access from Thames Way to the northern station entrance, and this would form a convenient link from footpath NU7A/2 to Ebbsfleet station. This proposal is shown as route E on the map in Appendix A.
- 3.4 There is scope for some small scale improvements to footpath NU7A/3 and NU7A/2, for example to provide lighting. This needs to be considered as an issue in the current planning applications for developments on the site of Northfleet Cement Works.

#### **4. Other proposed Northfleet – Ebbsfleet link: Footpath NU7A/1**

- 4.1 Footpaths NU7A/1 and NU7A/2 form a route from South Kent Avenue to Thames Way at the entrance to the Northfleet Cement Works site. The route crosses the “North Kent” railway line on a high level bridge, and south of this crossed the sidings on another bridge that has been removed for renovation. KCC has requested that the missing bridge is replaced by April 2010 at the latest.
- 4.2 This route could form a useful pedestrian link from Northfleet to Ebbsfleet when the missing bridge is replaced, provided that the path is upgraded and Land Securities construct the new access to the north entrance to Ebbsfleet station.

#### **5. Other Northfleet – Ebbsfleet links: proposed short cut**

- 5.1 In the short term Land Securities are unlikely to construct the new access to the north entrance to Ebbsfleet station, so Kent Highway Services proposed to High Speed One (who own the high speed railway stations) that a simple alternative would be a short pedestrian link from Thames Way through the eastern station car park. This is shown as route F on the map in Appendix A. It has the advantage that no bridge would need to be built over the Ebbsfleet stream. However, it is understood from High Speed One’s consultants that this proposal is regarded as unacceptable as it presents an increased security risk to the cars in the car park.

#### **6. Improvements in the short term**

- 6.1 As there is little possibility of creating more direct routes in the short term, Kent Highway Services is planning to make improvements to the existing pedestrian route between Northfleet station and Ebbsfleet station. The changes would comprise:
  - Sign posts to show the route from one station to the other
  - Dropped kerbs in Railway Street
  - Dropped kerbs and new footway at the roundabout entrance to Ebbsfleet station.

- 6.2 Kent Highway Services have also been liaising with consultants working for High Speed One in order to promote better access to Ebbsfleet station. The consultants have proposed that High Speed One should consider constructing a footway (or shared-use footway / cycle path) around the barriers at the entrance to the station car park.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS:** None

All requests to inspect the above documents **MUST** be directed in the first instance to the Committee Section of the Democratic Services Department

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