

CANTERBURY JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD Date

Subject: **Whitstable Town Centre Proposal for Traffic Management**

Director/Head of Service: KCC Head of Transport and Development

Decision Issues: **These matters are within the authority of the Kent County Council**

Decision: Non - key

CCC Ward/KCC Division: **Harbour / Whitstable**

Summary: *The report presents a proposal for possible future traffic management in Whitstable Town centre.*

To Recommend:

1. That consultation be undertaken on a scheme to make part of Oxford Street, High Street, and Harbour Street one way northbound, and to pedestrianise part of Harbour Street;
2. That a signing scheme is implemented to direct traffic to the town centre via alternative routes;
3. That a summer Park and Ride scheme is supported.

Classification: THIS REPORT IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Introduction

1. The current traffic management scheme in Oxford Street, High Street and Harbour Street was approved by JTB in 2003 and constructed in 2004 with funding from both the City and County Councils. The scheme includes:
 - a 20mph zone in Oxford Street, High Street and all of the streets to the north and west of Cromwell Road
 - Surface treatments on the carriageway and informal pedestrian crossing points in Oxford street and High Street
 - A loading ban in High Street and Oxford Street between 8-9am and 3-6pm Mondays to Fridays and loading bays at intervals along these streets where loading is permitted.
 - A new zebra crossing just north of St Alphege Church
 - on street parking controls in the town centre

Background

2. Prior to the implementation of this scheme, three major consultation exercises had been held since 1989 on options for traffic management in Whitstable. The High Street and Oxford Street are frequently congested and this has led to requests to implement a one way gyratory scheme using Oxford Street and High Street for north bound traffic and Cromwell Road for south bound traffic. In the past when consultation has been carried out on this a consensus of opinion has not been reached.
3. The current levels of congestion in the High Street and Oxford Street can cause traffic to be stationary for relatively long periods of time, particularly on busy summer weekends and bank holidays when the town is at its most popular. Pedestrians can spill off the footways, particularly in Harbour Street where the narrow footways cannot contain all of the pedestrians and the narrow carriageway encourages pedestrians to cross easily. The punctuality of the bus service cannot be guaranteed owing to the levels of congestion that sometimes occurs in Harbour Street, High Street and Oxford Street.
4. Traffic flows in Oxford Street are 9,500 vehicles per 24 hour day, two-way; and the 85th percentile speed is 21mph for vehicles in both directions. Traffic flows in Cromwell Road are approximately 5,000 vehicles per day with 85th percentile speeds of 28mph (2002)
5. Canterbury City Council is currently consulting on amendments to the parking and loading arrangements in the High Street and Oxford Street. If agreed, this would extend the hours that the loading ban operates to 8.30 – 18.30 daily and would provide disabled parking bays in Argyle Road. This should ensure that vehicles can only wait or load on the carriageway in appropriate locations, but will require significant levels of enforcement to improve compliance.
6. Traffic calming measures were constructed in Cromwell Road in the mid 1990s in the expectation that additional traffic would be diverted to Cromwell Road. These measures and the on street parking have resulted in congestion at times in Cromwell Road, and the channelizing of the traffic has exacerbated the structural problems of the carriageway.

Proposed Scheme

7. The scheme that is now proposed combines the benefits of other schemes that have previously been discussed and provides an opportunity to ease traffic flow in High Street and improve the pedestrian environment in Harbour Street with less disruption to Cromwell Road than other schemes that have previously been discussed.
8. This scheme involves:
 - Oxford Street and High Street one way northbound from the junction with Nelson Road,
 - Pedestrianisation of Harbour Street between 10.30 to 4.30 daily from the junction with Horsebridge to the junction with Woodlawn Street, and prohibition of driving except for loading in this length of Harbour Street outside these times.
 - Reversal of the direction of traffic flow in Harbour Street from its junction with Horsebridge to its junction with Woodlawn Street

High Street

9. These measures offer the opportunity in some locations in Oxford Street to provide additional parking or loading bays, and in High Street to widen footways to encourage a

café culture. This make use of and expand on the buffer zones which were created when the 20mph zone was implemented and would also help to reduce traffic speeds which tend to increase in one way streets.

10. Oxford Street and High Street currently have a series of personal injury crashes spread out along both streets featuring predominantly pedestrians. When the streets were surveyed to determine whether any engineering measures could be provided to reduce the crash problem, the solution was to provide additional traffic calming measures. Depending on the design of the areas of widened footways and loading / parking bays, it may be necessary to provide additional slowing features to ensure compliance with the 20mph zone and improve the pedestrian safety.
11. Traffic from side roads off High Street and Oxford Street to the north of Nelson Road will be required to use the High Street northbound and will therefore experience longer journeys to reach, for example, Canterbury Road.

Harbour Street

12. If all vehicles were to be removed from Harbour Street between its junctions with Woodlawn Street and High Street between 10.30am and 4.30pm daily, this would improve significantly the pedestrian environment. At present, at busy times pedestrians continually have to step off the footways to pass one another and are at risk of vehicle strikes from passing HGVs. Outside these times it would be necessary to allow vehicles to enter this length of Harbour Street for loading and unloading only. Air quality in Harbour Street would be improved with the removal of the majority of traffic and the planned resurfacing scheme could take account of the reduced vehicle loads and repaving could be undertaken in materials to encourage pedestrians to use the carriageway.
13. Motorists' compliance with the pedestrian zone would improve if the direction of traffic flow on Harbour Street were to be reversed. This would mean that northbound traffic would use Horsebridge and Sea Street as at present, but after 4.30 any traffic needing to access Harbour Street for loading would be able to do so from the south.
14. Harbour Street east of the junction with Woodlawn Street will need to remain two-way to permit access to the western harbour entrance, but through traffic will need to be deterred from using this length of street to prevent queues of vehicles trying to turn around at the junction of Harbour Street and Sea Street. This will be essential for the success of the scheme and will rely on remodelling the junction of Harbour Street and Cromwell Road to discourage through traffic and good advance signing. The removal of much of the westbound traffic from the eastern length of Harbour Street will also benefit pedestrians crossing from south side to the harbour.
15. At present traffic in Woodlawn Street at its junction with Harbour Street is required to turn left. It will be necessary to change this so that these vehicles turn right to avoid the pedestrian zone. This will require remodelling at the junction to encourage this manoeuvre and will help pedestrians who currently have a large bellmouth junction to cross.
16. At present Victoria Street car park is accessed from Harbour Street. It will necessary to change the access to the car park to Albert Street so that it remains accessible throughout the day. This will require some rearrangement within the car park.
17. Any vehicle using Harbour Street, either outside the pedestrian zone times, or an emergency service vehicle during the day will not be permitted to travel south on High

Street, but will be required to turn right into Horsebridge and Sea Street. This may make the access rather convoluted. Vehicles should not be encouraged to divert into Terry's Lane to avoid the one way order in the High Street, and this may need to be prevented.

Cromwell Road

18. It is proposed that Cromwell Road should remain two-way for its entire length. Cromwell Road needs to have significant strengthening works undertaken before additional traffic can be routed onto it. At present the traffic calming that was constructed in the early 1990s channelizes the vehicle tracks and in places narrows the carriageway to single track traffic. Traffic modelling will need to be undertaken to determine the volume of additional traffic that is likely to divert to Cromwell Road before an assessment can be made of whether the traffic calming should be retained, or removed when the resurfacing works are undertaken.
19. Cromwell Road has lengths of uncontrolled parking bays and lengths where parking is prohibited: some by single yellow line and some by double. Again, an assessment will have to be undertaken to determine whether additional parking restrictions will be required to enable free flowing traffic.

Buses and Cyclists

20. The main Whitstable / Herne Bay / Canterbury triangle buses run at a 15 minute frequency, which will shortly improve to a 10 minute frequency, through the High Street. The volume of congestion in the High Street leads to a lack of confidence in the punctuality of the bus service. If the punctuality of the northbound service could be guaranteed with one way traffic flow this would be a considerable improvement, however the southbound service would divert to Cromwell Road and would not serve Harbour Street. Early consultation with bus operators will be required if the scheme is to succeed.
21. Southbound cyclists will not be permitted to use High Street and the one-way length of Oxford Street. It will not be possible to create a contra-flow cycle lane in between the loading bays on these streets and southbound cyclists will need to divert to either Cromwell Road or Regent Street. High Street is not currently signed as a cycle route so it is not envisaged that additional cycle route signing will be required.

Additional Measures

22. Two additional measures are proposed which could be undertaken in the short term and would help to improve traffic flow.

Park and Ride

23. A temporary Park & Ride site operating at weekends and bank holidays was set up this summer by Canterbury City Council using the Kent Messenger car park at Estuary View, and the adjacent George Wilson car park. It proved particularly successful during the two weekends of the Oyster Festival and on Bank Holiday Monday when the 200 hundred spaces were full. The site was open for 9 weekends and typically attracted 70 cars per day. Surveys of the users showed that the majority of users were visitors, a significant number had come from the A2 / M2 and that 90% would use it again. Although the subsidy per passenger was high, this demonstrates that a summer weekend Park & Ride site is viable and would remove traffic from the town centre. The costs of subsidy may reduce but will be an ongoing annual cost. At present the scheme relies on the goodwill of the landowner. The scheme cost would increase exponentially if the capital cost of land and construction were required.

24. The cost of the subsidy for the Park and Ride bus was £20,000 for the 9 weekends. This would reduce with more marketing as the scheme becomes better known and better used. There were some times when the bus efficiency reduced owing to the congestion in the town centre and therefore this would still need to be addressed.
25. The efficiency of the bus service could be addressed by rerouting it via Tankerton either via Church Street or via Chestfield roundabout which has a better junction with Thanet Way and a better crash record. (Swalecliffe bridge is not suitable for double decker buses) However, the bus service still has to penetrate the local road network to deliver and pick up passengers from an appropriate stop.

Signing Improvements

26. A package of signing measures could be undertaken to encourage motorists away from Oxford Street, High Street and Harbour Street. Traffic for the Harbour and Tankerton could be advised to continue east along the Thanet Way to Chestfield Roundabout and Herne Bay Road. Any traffic missing these signs could be signed onto Cromwell Road at the mini roundabout junction with Oxford Street. Traffic leaving Gorrell Tank car park could be signed onto the Thanet way via Tankerton Road and Herne Bay Road.
27. At present, the B road through the town is Canterbury Road, Oxford Street, High Street, Sea Street, Tower Parade, Tankerton Road and St John's Road and therefore traffic is directed onto this route. There are no A roads north of the Thanet Way. It may be the case that visitors to the town are unaware that alternative routes avoiding the High Street are available and it is therefore suggested that a modest signing scheme could direct London and Thanet traffic via Herne Bay Road onto the Thanet way at Chestfield Roundabout. This is likely to cost in the region of £10,000

Consultation

28. These proposals have been formulated in consultation with a working party comprising Canterbury 4 Business, the Whitstable Chamber of Commerce, local County Members and Canterbury City Council. Wider consultation with residents, businesses and local organisations will be required so that any additional issues can be addressed.

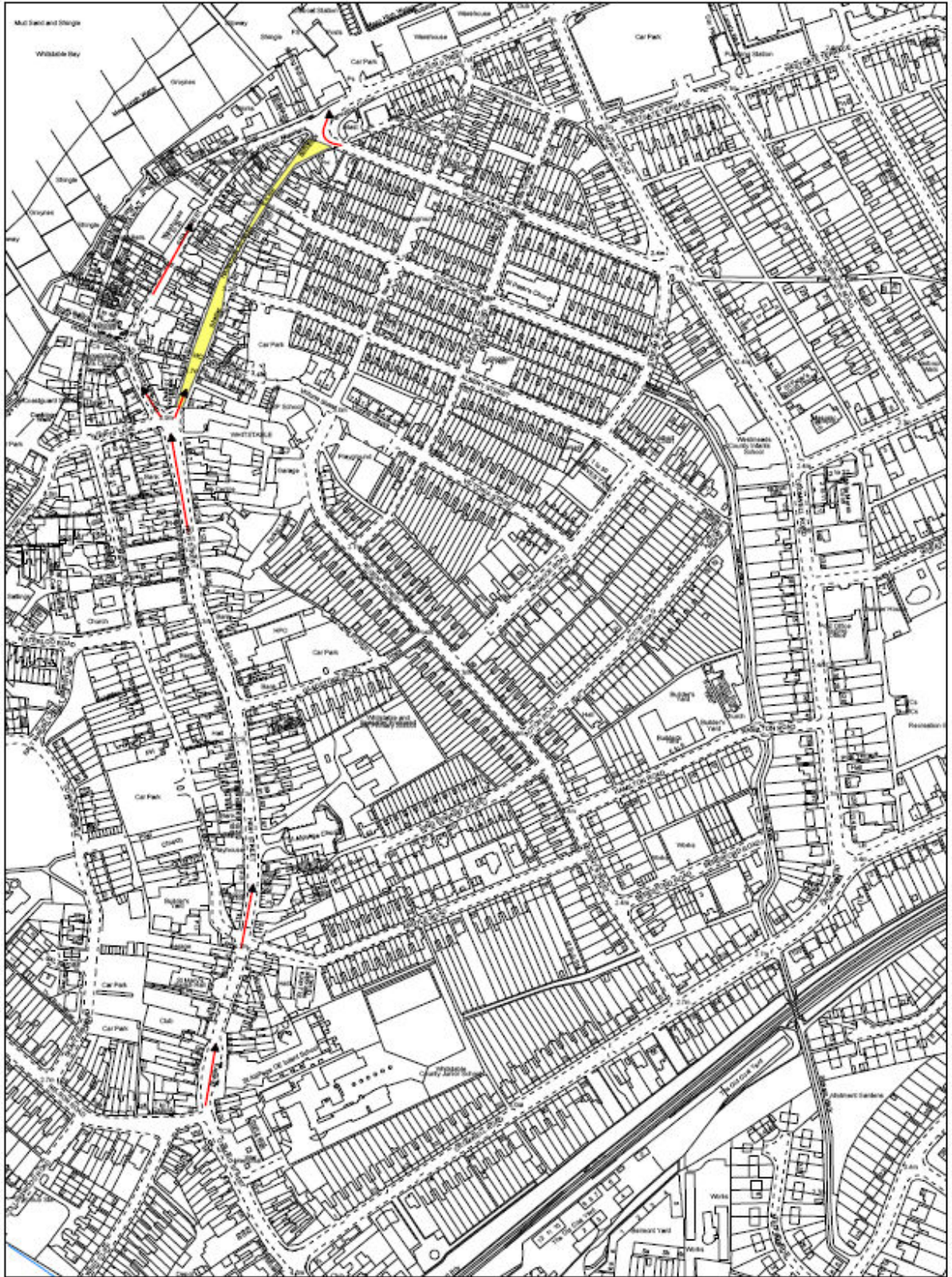
Recommendation

29. It is recommended that traffic surveys are undertaken to assess the volume of traffic that will result in each of the affected streets and that consultation is undertaken on this proposal.
30. It is also recommended that a signing scheme is implemented showing alternative routes into and out of the town centre, and that the summer Park and Ride scheme is supported.

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Attachments:

Appendix A: Drawing showing proposed traffic management.



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Title

