

Report to: Lead Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 21 May 2018

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Traffic Management in the High Street, Alfriston

Purpose: To consider the outcomes of the design review for the introduction of traffic signals in the High Street, Alfriston and the recommendation to carry out a trial traffic signal scheme

RECOMMENDATION: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Note the conclusions of the design review undertaken on the traffic signal scheme, as presented by East Sussex County Council at their consultation exercise in 2016;**
 - (2) Note the review of the alternative measures, as presented by the Conserve Alfriston Group in May 2017;**
 - (3) Agree that the proposals for a trial traffic signal scheme, as set out in this report, should be taken forward alongside a further four week trial of a 20mph speed limit so that the local community can consider the two schemes independently of one another and the results from this exercise shall be presented to Lead Member in Spring 2019 for further consideration.**
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1. Background

1.1 In May and June 2016 a public consultation exercise was held by East Sussex County Council (ESCC) to seek views about proposals for traffic management improvements in Alfriston High Street. The measures presented included the introduction of traffic signals at either end of the High Street, with an accompanying 20mph speed limit and limited widening of the footway in the narrow section of the High Street.

1.2 A total of 389 questionnaires were returned from the consultation exercise. 315 returned questionnaires were from Alfriston postcodes. Of the responses received from the consultation exercise, the majority agreed that there are traffic related problems in the High Street causing congestion, problems for pedestrians and damage to pavements and buildings. In total 54% of those who responded to the consultation supported the introduction of the proposed traffic signal scheme and 20mph speed limit in the centre of the village, with 39% opposed or strongly opposed. Of the two options that were presented for consultation at the southern end of the High Street, a majority supported full signalisation of Weavers Lane (Option 1). The 2016 consultation material is at Appendix 1 to the report.

1.3 In September 2016 the Lead Member for Transport and Environment approved the recommendation that the scheme involving the introduction of traffic signals at either end of the narrow section of the High Street, with the full signalisation of Weavers Lane, be taken to detailed design. This would enable the costs of the scheme to be determined with a view that a further report would be presented to a future Lead Member decision making meeting, to advise whether the scheme should progress to construction.

2. Appraisal

2.1 Following the September 2016 Lead Member decision making meeting, our Highways team were commissioned to progress with the detailed design of the project. Before further design was undertaken, Highways carried out a review of the proposals presented at the 2016 consultation event, to confirm the viability of the scheme and take account of the feedback obtained during the consultation process.

2.2 As part of this review several observations on the scheme's impact were identified, notably at Market Square. The current situation at Market Square affords both northbound and southbound traffic the opportunity to select which side of the island to pass depending on traffic conditions. The introduction of traffic signals south of Market Square, as presented in the 2016 consultation

proposals, would result in northbound traffic having to pass on the west side of the island because southbound traffic would be queuing at the traffic signals and using the carriageway to the east of the island. This in turn creates a one-way system. To enforce and regulate this arrangement, additional signing and road lining would be required, leading to additional street furniture being introduced within this historic setting.

2.3 The proposed arrangement to Market Square would also cause operational problems to bus services. Through consultation carried out during February 2017, local bus operators raised concerns about the impact to their services resulting from the proposed one-way operation of Market Square. Currently southbound buses wait on the west side of the island at Market Square out of the way of passing traffic (as shown in Photo 1 at Appendix 2). This would no longer be possible if the 2016 proposals were introduced, as the carriageway to the west of the island at Market Square will be for northbound traffic only. There are limited alternative locations for the bus to stop away from passing traffic if the west side of the central island could no longer be used.

2.4 In respect of social impact, Market Square is a key focal point within the village, with numerous social events held here throughout the year. These events often informally make use of the carriageway space west of the island. For most of these events, through traffic is not impeded as this can pass to the east of the island (as shown in Photo 2 at Appendix 2). Without a road closure in place the current proposals would prevent these social events from using Market Square, given that northbound traffic would always be using the carriageway on the west side of the island.

2.5 In terms of safety, poor visibility coupled with the narrow carriageway width does not make the junction with North Street conducive as the primary thoroughfare for northbound traffic. Northbound vehicles having to pass on the west side of the island would need to make a tight left turn manoeuvre back into North Street to continue their journey north. Vehicle tracking has been carried out which demonstrates that larger vehicles would encroach into the opposite southbound side of the road to make this manoeuvre, as shown in Layouts 1 and 2 at Appendix 2.

2.6 To mitigate the impacts on Market Square, it is recommended that the northern set of traffic signals are repositioned further south, near Star Lane. By moving the traffic signals away from Market Square, it is envisaged that traffic behaviour around the Square can remain unchanged. Further traffic modelling was conducted in November 2017 to assess this option and evaluate how well traffic signals can operate in the Village. The traffic model was based on traffic signals being proposed at Star Lane junction, outside The George, and Weavers Lane (Option 1 of the 2016 consultation plan). To support this exercise further traffic and video surveys were undertaken in July and August 2017.

2.7 The traffic modelling confirmed that average network journey times would not significantly increase during the peak periods that have been assessed. The modelling also confirmed parking could not be permitted at the approaches to the northern set of traffic signals at Star Lane to ensure northbound vehicles could pass southbound traffic waiting at traffic signals. Currently 40 metres of restricted parking (not between 8am and 7pm) is in place on the west side of the High Street north of Star Lane. The modelling also identified that 'average maximum' queue lengths of 140m in a northbound direction and 100m in a southbound direction are predicted during the peak periods being assessed with the 'absolute-maximum' queue length recorded in the southbound direction being approximately 200m. The modelling report is at Appendix 3.

2.8 Given the predicted queue lengths from the modelling exercise, to fully assess the implications of traffic signals throughout the day, and in particular the impact to Market Square, it is recommended that a trial signal scheme is carried out. The trial would enable any effects that the proposals may have to be observed in a live traffic situation. Whilst a traffic signal trial was carried out in 2006, this only covered the extent of the High Street between The Star to a point north of Weavers Lane and utilised fixed time signals only, of the type used for temporary roadworks. In the proposed new trial, linked signal control equipment will be used allowing traffic signal timings to be altered to react to any adverse effects of queueing traffic. It is proposed the trial will be carried out over a four-week period. The traffic signal technology will replicate, as much as reasonably practicable, the operation of a permanent traffic signal scheme. Traffic speed surveys, video surveys and queue lengths will be recorded during the trial period and residents and businesses will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the trial, either through the consultation pages of the East Sussex Highways website or via feedback forms.

2.9 To facilitate the trial scheme the existing waiting restricting (single yellow line) in the High Street north of Star Lane will be temporarily revoked. Vehicle turning bans at Star Lane (northbound

left in and right out) will also be temporarily revoked. In addition, a 20mph speed limit, as presented in the 2016 consultation, will be proposed. This will be introduced under a temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO). To reflect feedback received from representatives from Alfriston Parish Council (APC), ESCC will consider extending the trial of the temporary 20mph speed limit for a further four weeks beyond the initial four-week traffic signal trial period so that the community can consider the two measures independently from each other. East Sussex Highways will also use the trial scheme to provide evidence on its impact on air quality, something that APC have raised concerns about. It is intended to run the trial from September 2018. The outcomes of the trial scheme together with the feedback obtained from residents and businesses will be presented at a Lead Member decision making meeting in Spring 2019 for further consideration as to how the scheme progresses.

2.10 Since the 2016 Lead Member meeting, Highways Officers have been providing updates to key stakeholder groups, namely, South Downs National Park, Alfriston Parish Council and the Safe Alfriston for Everyone (SAFE) group. In addition our Highways team have been in communication with the Conserve Alfriston Group (CAG), who in April 2017 carried out their own public consultation exercise on an alternative option to the traffic signal scheme and subsequently in May 2017 presented a petition to the County Council to consider this option. The petition letter, a copy of the measures proposed and a summary of the feedback received from their April 2017 exhibition are at in Appendix 4. Standing Orders provide that where the Chairman considers it appropriate, petitions are considered by the relevant Committee or Lead Member and a spokesperson for the petitioners is invited to address the Committee in support of the petition. The Chairman has referred this petition to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment.

2.11 Highways Officers have undertaken a review of CAG's proposals which are at Appendix 5. In summary, several of the proposals CAG have proposed will be considered further by ESCC, namely improvements to HGV signing and the introduction on a 20mph speed limit. As for the remaining measures being promoted by CAG, although some may improve driver awareness and encourage a change in driver behaviour through the village, it is considered that these measures will not address the issue of managing opposing traffic flow through the narrow sections of the High Street or provide a suitable alternative to traffic signals to positively control traffic.

3 Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

3.1 The results of the initial design review conducted by our Highways team has indicated that the location of the traffic signals near Market Square, as presented in the 2016 consultation exercise, will cause operational problems at the Square. Traffic modelling carried out in November 2017 on the proposal for traffic signals at Weavers Lane and at Star Lane indicate that average network journey times would not significantly increase. However, predicted queue lengths may still cause operational problems at Market Square.

3.2 In view of this, it is recommended that the Lead Member for Transport and Environment agrees that a four-week trial using temporary traffic signals is conducted to enable any effects that the proposals may have to be observed in a live traffic situation. It is also recommended that a 20mph speed limit is introduced but extended four weeks beyond the initial four-week period so the community can consider the two measures independently from each other.

3.3 The outcomes of the trial scheme together with the feedback obtained from residents and businesses will then be presented at a Lead Member decision making meeting in Spring 2019 for further consideration as to how the scheme progresses.

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LOCAL MEMBER

Councillor Stephen Shing

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None