

**Report to:** Lead Member for Transport & Environment

**Date of meeting:** 21 February 2022

**By:** Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

**Title:** London Road, Bexhill – Traffic Management Proposals

**Purpose:** To consider the results of the stakeholder and public consultations on the London Road Traffic Management and Public Realm scheme and to seek approval to take forward elements of the scheme to detailed design and construction.

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***RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:***

- (1) Note the results of the stakeholder and public consultations on the London Road Traffic Management and Public Realm scheme;**
  - (2) Agree that all elements of the London Road Traffic Management and Public Realm scheme except the Town Hall Square options are taken forward to detailed design and construction as part of the Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements; and**
  - (3) Agree that a recommended way forward on the Town Hall Square options is presented back to the Lead Member following further discussions with Rother District Council.**
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## **1 Background Information**

1.1. The Hastings and Bexhill Movement and Access Package comprises a package of pedestrian, cycle and public transport improvement schemes across Bexhill, Hastings and St Leonards. One of the identified schemes within the package approved by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) is the London Road Traffic Management and Public Realm scheme in Bexhill with a focus on improving the pedestrian environment, including the public realm, and traffic management in the area.

1.2. The extent of the London Road Traffic Management and Public Realm scheme is from its junction with the A259 and running south to and including its junction with Buckhurst Place including the one-way gyratory outside Bexhill Town Hall. The extent of the scheme also goes beyond London Road to include Buckhurst Place and part of Sackville Road to its junction with Western Road. The overall extent of the study area is illustrated in **Appendix 1**.

1.3. Funding for the works identified in the London Road Traffic Management and Public Realm would be funded by the Local Growth Fund monies secured from Government through the SELEP as well as from £300,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy secured from Rother District Council (RDC).

1.4. The London Road Traffic Management and Public Realm scheme will significantly contribute to supporting the County Council priorities relating to climate change, economic growth and recovery and health and wellbeing.

## **2 Additional Information**

### Scheme Proposals

2.1 The proposed London Road corridor scheme comprises the following elements:

- Beeching Road/London Road junction – introduce a mini roundabout to improve traffic management and reduce the risk of queued traffic extending to London Road’s junction with the A259 (Appendix 2)
- Buckhurst Place/Sackville Road junction – introduction of a mini roundabout to improve the existing traffic management arrangements and permanently widen the footways on both sides of the road under Sackville Road bridge. (Appendix 3)
- Terminus Road - new informal pedestrian crossing, rationalisation of guard railing and cycle parking stands installed. (Appendix 3)
- Windsor Road junction - introduce kerb build-out on the eastern side and an informal pedestrian crossing point. (Appendix 3)
- Town Hall Square – two options with public realm improvements to improve traffic management:
  - Option A – Remove gyratory and priority junction between London Road and Buckhurst Place (Appendix 4)
    - creation of a larger and enhanced public space outside the Town Hall
    - relocating bus stops to London Road and Buckhurst Place, a new zebra crossing facility on Buckhurst Place and new cycle parking facilities
    - Provision of new loading bays on Station Road and London Road; 3 taxi bays (a reduction of up to 4 spaces) and 17 general parking bays (a loss of around 17 spaces)
  - Option B - retain the current gyratory arrangement around Town Hall Square (Appendix 5)
    - upgrade existing bus stops
    - introduce a new raised zebra crossing at the southern end of London Road and new cycle parking facilities
    - Kerb works around junctions will help to slow down traffic and reduced crossing distances will allow pedestrians to cross more safely
    - Provision for 7 taxi bays and 23 general parking spaces (a loss of 11 spaces)

### Equalities Impact Assessment

2.2 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was carried out for both design options in order to consider the impact on groups with protected characteristics. By carrying out the EqIA and seeking feedback from stakeholder groups, potential impacts have been identified and all potential actions to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination and foster good relationships have been documented. These impacts include overall benefits for pedestrians through improved crossing facilities and widened footways, for cyclists with cycle parking, for bus users through upgraded stops. The widened footways would provide further assistance to wheelchair users, thus allowing them to pass other pedestrians in areas where they previously could not. In addition, the proposed schemes will also provide raised kerbs at all the surrounding bus stops, allowing step free access onto local buses. The designs illustrated within **Appendix 2 – 5** look to strengthening London Road’s role as a key gateway into the Bexhill town centre.

2.3 The EqIA also identified that people who are less mobile, have balance problems, have hearing or visual impairments will be encouraged and have more opportunities to walk and feel safer when travelling within Bexhill town centre due to the proposed public realm improvements, crossing facilities and widened footways.

2.4 Addressing and actioning these impacts has been considered in the design process. A copy of the EqIA is at **Appendix 6** and will remain a living document which will be updated at key stages throughout the life of the scheme.

### Stakeholder Engagement and Public Consultation

2.5 A stakeholder consultation exercise was undertaken between 28 July and 27 August 2021 with key stakeholder groups, which comprised of the emergency services, local cycling, disability,

and walking groups, Stagecoach, and RDC and County Council Members and officers, seeking their comments on the proposals. In response, stakeholders were generally supportive of the proposals with no significant issues raised. In addition, National Highways were separately consulted on (and support) the Beeching Road/London Road proposals.

2.6 Public consultation on the proposals were undertaken between 17 November and 10 December 2021. Leaflets were distributed to over 1,500 properties within approximately 400 metres of each of the individual proposed design options. The consultation was also promoted through the local press, social media, posters in Bexhill Library and Town Hall, and letters or emails to ward members. Information on the proposals was made available online via the County Council’s Citizen Space webpage with a questionnaire available which included open questions to encourage qualitative feedback.

2.7 A copy of the consultation summary report is provided in **Appendix 7**. There were a total of 179 direct responses, which equates to a 12% response rate which is considered average with regards to return of feedback.

*Buckhurst Place/Sackville Road and Beeching Road/London Road mini roundabouts*

2.8 Respondents were generally positive in their feedback on the two proposed mini-roundabout design options, with the overall majority supporting the proposals. A breakdown of responses received for each of the mini roundabout proposals is shown in the table below.

<b>Scheme Name</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Issues and concerns</b>	<b>Neutral /Unknown</b>
Buckhurst Place j/w Sackville Road	65%	23%	12%
Beeching Road j/w London Road	54%	31%	15%

2.9 The proposed footway widening under the rail bridge in Sackville Road will formalise the Tranche 1 Emergency Active Travel Fund measures that was introduced in summer 2020 in response to the lifting of Covid restrictions at the time. Since its installation, we have received positive feedback on the benefits that the footway widening has provided for pedestrians and requests for this to be formalised.

*Town Hall Square*

2.10 In relation to the two options presented for the Town Hall Square element of the scheme, the response was more mixed with no overall preference amongst respondents between the two.

<b>Scheme Name</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Issues and concerns</b>	<b>Neutral /Unknown</b>
Option A – remove gyratory and create T-junction at London Rd/Buckhurst Place	40%	53%	7%
Option B – retain existing gyratory	41%	47%	12%

2.11 A number of alternative suggestions for each of the two proposed design options were put forward by respondents, but these were similar to those explored and discounted as part of the feasibility stage. In addition, the following comments were also received regarding the two options:

- Concerns around the reduction in parking spaces for both schemes and the potential impact on the local economy due to lack of parking spaces for people to use when visiting the town centre.
- Option A had responses concerning raised congestion levels and queueing as well as aesthetic impacts on the local area and impacts on local bus service stops.

- Option B had concerned responses including, road safety issues, a lack of cyclist consideration and potential traffic queuing into Town Hall square as a result of the proposed pedestrian crossing.

2.12 As a result of the consultation feedback, it is proposed to decouple this element of the corridor scheme and review the design options also taking account of RDC wider aspirations to redevelop their Town Hall campus. Following this review and further discussions with RDC, a recommended way forward on the Town Hall Square element will be presented to a future Lead Member decision making meeting.

#### *Other elements of London Road Corridor scheme and General Comments*

2.13 For the remaining elements of the scheme – Windsor Road and Terminus Road – there was also broad support for the improvements identified.

2.14 In addition, a number of general comments were raised. The most prominent were:

- The scheme costs could be better spent repairing existing infrastructure
- The scheme will reduce the capacity for motorists leading to increased queues
- The scheme will encourage higher vehicle speeds
- The scheme will create traffic impacts elsewhere within Bexhill, especially for emergency services, and could traffic signals be installed instead of mini roundabouts.

2.15 A response to each of these key concerns raised by the consultation is at **Appendix 8**.

### **3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

3.1 The London Road corridor scheme forms part of the wider Hastings Bexhill Movement and Access Package and seeks to improve the pedestrian environment, including the public realm, and traffic management in this part of Bexhill. The scheme would be delivered using Local Growth Fund monies, as well as £300,000 Community Infrastructure Levy funding from Rother District Council.

3.2 The results of the public consultation show that there is overall support for the proposed two mini roundabout schemes at the junctions of Beeching Road/London Road and Buckhurst Place/ Sackville Road, which also includes localised widening of the footway under the rail bridge previously introduced as a temporary measure as part of the Tranche 1 Emergency Active Travel Fund measures, as well as the proposals in Terminus Road and the Windsor Road junction. It is recommended that these elements of the London Road scheme are taken forward to detailed design and construction through the Capital Programme of Local Transport Improvements.

3.3 In light of the mixed response to the two options put forward at consultation for the Town Hall Square element of the scheme, alongside Rother District Council's wider aspirations for redeveloping the Town Hall campus in Bexhill, it is recommended that following further discussions with the District Council on this element and the concerns raised in the consultation feedback that a report is presented back to the Lead Member on the preferred way forward for the Town Hall Square later in the year.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillors Geary, Hollidge

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None