

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of Meeting: 11 April 2022

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Polegate High Street Movement and Access Improvements and 20mph speed limit scheme

Purpose: To consider the results of the public consultation on the proposed Movement and Access improvements along Polegate High Street, including the introduction of a 20mph speed limit, and how the scheme will be taken forward

RECOMMENDATION: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Note the results of the public consultation on the movement and access improvements along Polegate High Street, including the introduction of a 20mph speed limit, bus stop and footway improvements; and**
 - (2) Agree that the scheme is taken forward to detailed design and construction as part of the 2022/23 Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements, subject to any delivery risks and delays arising from the current COVID-19 pandemic**
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1. Background Information

1.1 East Sussex County Council (ESCC) is promoting measures to improve movement and access along Polegate High Street. The proposals include reducing the existing 30mph speed limit along the whole of the High Street to 20mph, footway improvements and upgrades to existing bus stops.

1.2 The preliminary design has been developed using funds from the County Council's capital programme for local transport improvements. The design seeks to improve the environment for vulnerable users using the High Street and encourage a shift towards more sustainable modes of transport.

1.3 The scheme will significantly contribute to the County Council's priorities relating to climate change, economic growth and recovery, health and wellbeing.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 The proposals for Polegate High Street, as shown on the plan at Appendix 1, comprise:

- The introduction of a 20mph speed limit along the High Street between the Station Road/Hailsham Road mini-roundabout to the Wannock Road/A2270 signalised junction near the Horse & Groom Public House
- Localised footway widening where practicable within the highway boundary
- The introduction of dropped kerbs and tactile paving on side roads along the length of the High Street
- Localised footway resurfacing

2.2 The scheme will be delivered using development contributions secured towards local transport improvements in the Polegate area.

Stakeholder and Public Consultation

2.3 Informal consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders in November 2020, including emergency services, local cycle groups, Network Rail, disability groups, bus operators, County Councillors, District and Town Councillors. Comments on the proposals were received from Sussex Police and from Network Rail, because of the proximity of the full barrier level crossing in the town centre. The comments received helped to shape the scheme design.

2.4 Public consultation on the proposals was undertaken between 1 and 26 November 2021. Due to Covid restrictions, the consultation process was undertaken online via the County Council's consultation hub. The design proposals themselves were accompanied by a questionnaire which included open questions to encourage qualitative feedback. Leaflets about the consultation were distributed to over 6,000 properties in the vicinity of the proposed improvements.

Consultation responses

2.5 A total of 104 responses were received equating to a 1.7% response rate, which is low for a public consultation. A breakdown of the number of responses and the level of support received is shown below:

Scheme Name	Responses received	Support	Oppose	Don't know / no preference
Polegate High Street	104	59 (56.7%)	33 (31.7%)	12 (11.6%)

2.6 In the comments provided alongside the consultation responses, some respondents felt that the proposals would improve the town centre for residents, visitors and businesses and believed that the improvements would help the County Council achieve their stated objectives. The stakeholder and public consultations also raised, however, a number of issues about the proposals. These include:

- there is no, specific speeding problem along the High Street as vehicles are regularly delayed by the level crossing. The proposed speed reduction does not appear to be necessary
- inconsiderate parking along the High Street needs to be addressed and existing parking restrictions need to be policed. Many of the comments referred to problems caused by vehicles being parked on footways; the 20mph limit should be extended to encompass a wider area of Polegate, including the side roads
- vehicle speeds needed better policing
- Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) and / or speed cameras should be introduced to the High Street
- the scheme offers no significant benefits and is considered to be a waste of money
- consideration should be given to the introduction of additional pedestrian crossing facilities south of the level crossing

2.7 A copy of the consultation report, outlining the consultation process and comments received, can be found in Appendix 2.

2.8 The following responses are provided to the key issues raised:

- Although traffic speeds are not considered by some of the residents to be high enough to warrant the introduction of a 20mph speed limit, speed data captured at the site indicates that vehicle speeds are at their highest during the evenings and overnight. The introduction of the 20mph speed limit would ensure that vehicle speeds are kept low at all times
- Errant parking is reported to be a problem along Polegate High Street but would not be addressed by the proposed scheme. Parking in Wealden district has not been decriminalised meaning that this would be a matter for Sussex Police to enforce

- The introduction of ANPR / speed cameras is carefully regulated by the Sussex Safer Roads partnership. It is unlikely that Polegate High Street would meet the minimum criteria for the installation of these signs
- The introduction of additional pedestrian crossing points will be considered as a part of the next stage of the design process if approval to progress the scheme is given

Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

2.9 Separate to these proposed improvements for Polegate High Street, our Bus Service Improvement Plan approved in October 2021 identified proposals to introduce mobility hubs at various locations around the county to help deliver improved waiting facilities at key locations to encourage greater use of public transport. The two bus stops along Polegate High Street, southbound outside the Rail Station and northbound by the Medical Centre, have been identified as possible locations for these hubs.

2.10 The feasibility of including the mobility hubs into the High Street improvements has been investigated, however it has been concluded that there is insufficient space within the public highway in which to provide a full facility at each bus stop. However, there is scope to incorporate additional interactive displays that would supplement the existing real time information signing already in situ and provide guidance on alternative travel facilities available. A report on the outcome of this feasibility study can be found at Appendix 3.

Improved Cycling provision

2.11 Furthermore, as part of the wider sustainable transport package associated with the A22 Corridor package considered at the Lead Member decision making meeting in March 2022, proposals were identified to improve cycle facilities at the northern end of Polegate High Street to improve access on and off the existing shared footway/cycleway near the Station Road/Hailsham Road mini-roundabout. These improvements would also improve the connectivity to the Cuckoo Trail route and the off-road cycle route along Station Road/Pevensey Road/Dittons Road to Stone Cross. The proposed changes are shown on the plan at Appendix 4.

2.12 This additional cycle provision has been included in the revised design for Polegate High Street and, subject to the outcome and recommendation of the Stage 1 safety audit, it is proposed that this will be taken forward as part of this scheme.

3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

3.1 Despite the low response rate, the results of the public consultation show that there is overall support for the implementation of the Polegate High Street Movement and Access improvements and 20mph speed limit scheme.

3.2 The footway improvements will benefit pedestrians, particularly those with visual impairments, and the lower speed limit of 20mph will result in a safer environment for pedestrians, particularly when crossing side roads, cyclists and general traffic, reflecting the recent changes in hierarchy and priority in the Highway Code. Improvements to cycling provision at the northern end of the High Street will help encourage greater use of cycling and connectivity onto existing routes in the town, whilst the interactive signage at the two bus stops will meet some of the mobility hub requirements detailed in our BSIP, and aid members of the public in their choice of travel.

3.3 The proposals will assist the County Council in meeting the objectives set out to achieve carbon neutrality from its activities as soon as possible and in any event by 2050.

3.4 Therefore, it is recommended that the scheme, incorporating the BSIP and cycling related improvements, is taken forward to detailed design and construction as part of the 2022/23 Capital Programme of Local Transport Improvements.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
None