

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment
Date of meeting: 20 November 2023
By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport
Title: Traffic Management Improvements – Alfriston Village
Purpose: To consider responses to the stakeholder and public consultations on the introduction of traffic management measures within Alfriston Village and seek approval to progress the scheme to detailed design and construction.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Note the comments of the public consultation; and**
 - (2) Approve the proposal for the traffic management improvements as set out in this report to be taken forward to detailed design and construction as part of the Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements.**
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1. Background

1.1. At a decision-making meeting on 17 June 2019, the Lead Member for Transport and Environment resolved to consult on a package of village-wide traffic calming measures in Alfriston, with the aim of alleviating some of the impacts of traffic using the C39 through the village. This followed the development of previous traffic management proposals involving traffic signals which were consulted on in 2016 and trialled in the village during 2018.

1.2. Following the Lead Member's decision, a package of village-wide traffic management measures has been developed informed both by a review of previous traffic management proposals in the village and through discussion with representatives from Alfriston Parish Council's (APC) traffic committee. The proposed package of measures was informed by data collected from a range of different sources to understand the characteristics of the study area's highway network. This data included an initial desk-based study and a review of personal injury collision (PIC), traffic flow, speed and non-motorised user (NMU) crossing movements.

1.3. The overall extent of the study area is illustrated at Appendix 1.

2. Additional Information

Scheme Proposals

2.1. The scheme itself comprises of the following traffic management measures:

- Introduction of a 20mph village-wide speed limit to reduce vehicle speeds in the village whilst improving the environment for pedestrians and cyclists;
- priority build-outs on the northern and southern approaches to the village, designed to physically slow down traffic entering the village and support the reduced speed limit, whilst giving priority to those leaving the village; and
- 'village gateway' signage.

2.2 In addition to the village gateways, further design options were prepared relating to:

- Advisory lorry route signage along the A27 to discourage Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV) travelling through the village from the A27 to access the A259;
- Improving the visibility of the existing 7.5-ton weight limit sign on Alfriston Road to HGV drivers with signage mounted onto a yellow background, making the sign more noticeable especially amongst vegetation or against the skyline; and
- Removal of the existing give-way lines in Market Square as well as incorporating additional double yellow lines outside the Star Public House on the High Street.

2.3 Although not forming part of the design work undertaken on the scheme proposals, it was agreed with APC that the public consultation would additionally seek views on changing the existing road surface in High Street/North Street (or Market Square only) to either buff coloured anti-skid type surfacing or cobble/granite setts. This proposal would not be funded by East Sussex County Council (ESCC), but by APC through a Public Works Loan Board loan (with associated estimated increase to council tax B and D per annum over a duration of 50 years).

2.4 The consultation design proposals are at Appendix 2.

Equalities Impact Assessment

2.5 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was carried out for the village traffic management proposals 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.

2.6 These impacts include overall benefits for pedestrians through reducing the current speed limit to 20 mph alongside the introduction of the priority buildouts on the approaches to the village and village gateway signs. The introduction of the proposed package of measures will especially help older people, especially those who are less mobile, have balance problems, or have hearing or visual impairments, to feel safer and more confident in using the current footways and the village square. This will encourage older people to walk more, which in turn will provide greater health benefits. Reducing speed as part of the overall package of measures for the village will also allow parents to feel more confident walking with their children due to the calmer traffic environment.

2.7 Addressing and actioning these impacts has been considered as part of the design process. A copy of the EqIA is at Appendix 3. This will remain an active document which will be updated at key stages throughout the life of the scheme including as part of the detailed design stage as well as, prior and after construction.

Stakeholder Engagement

2.8 A stakeholder consultation exercise was undertaken between 6 and 23 September 2022, asking statutory and key stakeholders to provide feedback in the form of written representations on the proposed traffic management options. Requests for written representations were also sent to 28 stakeholders including the emergency services, South Downs National Park Authority and Historic England as well as County Council and Wealden District councillors.

2.9 Representations were received from seven stakeholders with no stakeholders opposed to the proposed traffic management options. APC are supportive of the traffic management measures proposed.

2.10 Sussex Police raised concerns about the proposed removal of the give-way road markings in Market Square, given the poor visibility at the junction where they are located. They noted that the proposed 20mph speed limit may offset the removal of this road safety feature to an extent but requested that if the road markings are removed, that close monitoring of the operation of the junction should take place post-removal and the design reconsidered if appropriate as a result. Final options for this aspect of the overall scheme will therefore be considered as part of the final design process.

2.11 The stakeholder consultation report is at Appendix 4.

Public Consultation

2.12 The public consultation material was developed and agreed in partnership with APC. This included questions about the scheme and adopted a “digital first” approach to reach as wide an audience as possible via the online East Sussex Citizen Space consultation hub. The consultation ran from 23 January to 12 February 2023.

2.13 Members of the public were invited to give their views by filling in the questionnaire online but with the opportunity to complete via post or email. The questionnaire and factsheets were available on request in alternative formats such as large print, audio or languages other than English. Paper copies of the questionnaire and the factsheets were also available upon request.

2.14 Leaflets were distributed to 384 addresses located within the boundary of Alfriston Village. The scheme was also promoted through the local media, posters, letters and emails to ward Members and to the owners and occupiers of Alfriston properties. In addition, printed copies of consultation drawings and information were also made available at the Village Store and Hicks the Newsagents. A copy of the consultation summary report that was undertaken is at Appendix 5.

2.15 There were a total of 132 direct responses, which equates to a response rate of 34%. Typical survey response rates can lie anywhere in the region between 5% and 30%. This particular response rate could therefore be considered as 'positive' with regard to returns of feedback.

2.16 Overall, the responses received to the proposed package of traffic management interventions, including the improved HGV route signing, were positive, with 89% of respondents in favour of the proposed scheme. However, a total of around 8% of respondents opposed the design option presented. From the comments received, concerns were raised relating to the proposed measures potentially creating further congestion and increasing journey times through the village. Whilst these potential impacts are acknowledged, they are outweighed by the benefits the scheme will create of reducing vehicle speeds and providing a safer environment for all road users, but especially pedestrians walking in the village.

2.17 There was strong support for proposed measures to address congestion in High Street/Market Square, with 76.5% of respondents supporting parking restrictions.

2.18 In respect of the proposals to change the surfacing materials, the majority of respondents did not support the introduction of coloured surfacing or setts throughout the extent of High Street/North Street. However, 42% supported their introduction in the Market Street area only. Whilst this proposal does not form part of the proposed package of traffic management interventions, the APC may wish to explore this option in more detail.

2.19 A detailed response to the key concerns raised during consultation is at Appendix 6.

3. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The proposed package of traffic management improvements for Alfriston village are designed to provide greater comfort and safety for those walking and cycling in the village, and to encourage drivers and riders to respect the historic environment through which they are travelling.

3.2 The proposed build-outs at either end of the village will serve as speed-reducing features and support the proposed 20mph speed limit; address congestion by giving priority to vehicles exiting the village; as well as provide a gateway on the entry points into the village. The proposed improvements to HGV route signing will help address inappropriate use of the C39 by lorries. Following the stakeholder consultation in autumn 2022 and public consultation in early 2023, there is a significant level of support locally for the proposed traffic management measures in Alfriston village, with only limited concerns highlighted around congestion and journey times which are outweighed by the benefits that the scheme will provide.

3.3 It is therefore recommended that the Lead Member approves the proposed traffic management measures for Alfriston village and agrees that they are progressed to detailed design and construction as part of the Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Stephen Shing

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None