

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 18 November 2024

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Consultation outcome for revised Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue bus priority proposals in Eastbourne.

Purpose: To consider the outcome of the second public consultation for the revised bus priority proposals for Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue as part of the East Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Note the outcomes of the second public consultation on revised bus priority proposals for Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue;**
 - (2) Advise petitioners that the issues raised by both petitions relating to bus priority proposals for Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue have been reviewed and considered;**
 - (3) Approve the revised Seaside and St Anthony's bus priority scheme to proceed to detailed design and construction stage in 2025/26; and**
 - (4) Delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to approve the final content of the Project Adjustment Request submitted to the Department for Transport.**
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1. Background Information

1.1 Following the publication of the previous Government's Bus Back Better Strategy in March 2021, East Sussex County Council submitted its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to the Department for Transport (DfT) in October 2021. The East Sussex BSIP sets out ambitious and structured plans and supporting policies to improve and increase the use of bus services and bus related infrastructure in the county. The delivery of the BSIP requires the County Council to work in close co-operation with neighbouring Local Transport Authorities and key stakeholders including local bus operators, statutory consultees, community and business voices, bus passengers, and the voluntary and health transport sectors.

1.2 In July 2022, the County Council were notified that East Sussex had been indicatively allocated £41.4m towards the delivery of capital (£22.1m) and revenue (£19.3m) elements of its BSIP. Of the £22.1m capital, £18.5m was indicatively allocated towards the delivery of bus priority measures in the county. In September 2022, the DfT confirmed the County Council's BSIP funding with a spend and delivery deadline of 31 March 2025.

1.3 The BSIP bus priority public consultation, for 7 proposed schemes at feasibility stage, ran for 8 weeks between 31 July and 25 September 2023. The outcomes of the consultation were reported to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment's decision-making meeting on 15 January 2024. The report outlined that the Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue scheme had the largest proportion of opposing responses, with 70.2% strongly opposing this scheme. The consultation responses highlighted concerns about the loss of or changes to on-street parking provision and perceived negative impact on general traffic flow because of redesigning road space to introduce bus lanes.

1.4 In response, the Lead Member for Transport and Environment resolved at the January 2024 decision-making meeting that officers should redefine the design and scope of the bus priority measures along the Seaside corridor to ensure a refined proposal continues to support the aims of the East Sussex BSIP while addressing concerns raised in the 2023 consultation.

2. Supporting Information

Revised Design

2.1 Following the Lead Member's decision in January 2024, the original proposals for bus priority on Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue were reviewed to develop a revised design which sought to address the concerns raised during the summer 2023 consultation and balance the competing demands for the use of the available road space. In developing the revised design, further engagement was undertaken with the local community, councillors, business representatives and the local bus operator. A summary of the revised scheme and the changes between the previous and revised proposals, is set out in Appendix 1.

2.2 The majority of comments from the 2023 consultation highlighted that on-street parking provision and the potential loss of these parking spaces was of great concern to residents and local businesses. The retention of some of the existing on-street parking in the revised design has been achieved by rationalising the extent of the previously proposed bus priority measures along Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue. Under the revised designs, it is proposed to retain 296m of parking on Seaside (providing parking for approximately 50 vehicles); this is equivalent to 54% of current on-street parking. On St Anthony's Avenue, the revised proposal retains 280m of parking (providing parking for approximately 47 vehicles), which is equivalent to 57% of the current on-street parking.

2.3 To better understand the current use of parking spaces and the potential impact of reducing on-street parking on the north side of Seaside to accommodate the bus lane, parking beat surveys were carried out by enumerators on Thursday 9 May and Saturday 11 May 2024 between the hours of 7am and 7pm. Beats were undertaken on an hourly basis, to understand the number of parked vehicles and the duration of the parking. Any vehicles parked for a duration under one hour were not recorded. The results of the survey showed that the demand for on-street parking relative to the kerbside space available is relatively low on this section of Seaside, and therefore the potential level of displaced parking to accommodate a bus lane would be relatively minor.

2.4 The introduction of the bus priority measures on Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue would improve journey times for buses and their overall reliability beyond the extent of the proposed scheme. The estimated combined two-way journey time saving for buses travelling eastbound and westbound on the scheme extent is up to 7 minutes in a congested period. For the proposed eastbound bus lane from Windermere Crescent to Seaside Roundabout, the estimated journey time saving in a congested period is up to 3.6 minutes per bus. For the westbound proposed bus lane between Langney Roundabout and Seaside Roundabout, the estimated journey time saving in a congested period is up to 3.4 minutes per bus. The full breakdown of bus journey saving times can be found in Appendix A of the consultation report at Appendix 2.

Consultation approach

2.5 The BSIP Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue bus priority public consultation period ran for 5 weeks between 15 July and 18 August 2024. The consultation approach is outlined in detail in section 2 of the consultation report at Appendix 2. In summary this included:

- A consultation webpage – ([East Sussex BSIP Bus Priority Measures - Seaside & St Anthony's Avenue, Eastbourne - East Sussex - Citizen Space](#)),
- 3 in-person drop-in consultation events in the Seaside and St Anthony's area with exhibition boards showing the proposals and members of the project team available to answer questions. The events were well attended by residents, interest groups, bus operator staff, locally elected councillors and Eastbourne MP;
- Distribution of 1,100 consultation postcards to properties in the area surrounding the proposed Seaside and St Anthony's bus priority scheme. 500 consultation postcards were also delivered to local bus operator Stagecoach who distributed them to bus passengers on the route; and
- Social media coverage and press release.

2.6 The existing 2023 consultation stakeholder list was also updated. Stakeholders who were advised of the second consultation included County, District and Borough Councillors, local MP, local bus operators, local businesses and organisations representing the business community, active travel groups, accessibility action groups, transport users, education providers, emergency services, resident associations, as well as voluntary and community sector organisations.

2.7 Prior to the consultation, briefings were also held with elected Members from East Sussex County Council, Eastbourne Borough Council and the local MP.

2.8 The Equality Impact Assessment was updated prior to the second public consultation. It will be updated again to reflect the outcome of the 2024 public consultation and any subsequent stages of design and delivery.

Consultation Outcomes and Analysis

2.9 A total of 2,788 surveys were completed during the consultation period. Of these, 2,756 responses were completed online, while 32 paper copies were received. In addition, 68 emails were received during the consultation to the BSIP Consultation Mailbox on the proposals and 7 letters were received.

2.10 The consultation outcomes are detailed in section 4 of the consultation report at Appendix 2. As set out in the table below, the level of support for the proposal overall exceeds the level of opposition; 56% support (combined values) vs 37% oppose (combined values) with 7% neither supporting nor opposing the proposals overall.

	Strongly support	Support	Neither support / oppose	Oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know
Support for scheme overall	41%	15%	7%	6%	31%	<1%

2.11 Further analysis of the consultation responses highlight:

- 88% (925) of respondents live in the Eastbourne Area.
- 32% of consultation respondents travel by bus along the proposed bus lane route more than 5 times a week. 22% of respondents drive along the proposed scheme extent more than 5 times a week.
- 53% of those respondents that travel by bus along Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue are supportive of the proposals overall with 38% opposing the proposals overall.
- Opposition to the proposals are significantly greater among those living nearby to the proposed scheme (72% combined oppose), compared with those that do not (48% combined oppose).
- 33 respondents, (3% of total respondents) are owners of a business on Seaside or St Anthony's Avenue. 88% of these respondents strongly opposed the proposals, with a further 6% opposing the proposals.
- Respondent views on the impact on congestion of the proposals are largely split. Whilst 30% felt congestion would improve, 32% felt that congestion would be worse.
- 54% of respondents said that the bus priority proposals would improve bus services whilst 15% said that bus services would be worse. 20% of respondents felt that bus services would remain the same as they currently are.

2.12 When analysing the open question text responses, of those who supported the proposal, respondents felt that the proposals were a good idea, that journey times would improve; buses would be more reliable; traffic flow would improve for all vehicles and more people would use the bus with the bus priority measures in place.

2.13 Of those respondents who opposed the proposal, the most common open text responses showed that these respondents felt the proposal would lead to more traffic congestion, that the road is not wide enough to accommodate a bus lane, and the scheme is too expensive. The most common concerns were raised over the loss of parking and the impact that a lack of on-street parking might have on local businesses.

Traffic Modelling

2.14 In response to concerns raised about the perceived negative impact of the proposed bus priority measures on congestion on the Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue corridor, additional micro-simulation

modelling has been undertaken for two scenarios looking at both the morning (07:45 – 08:45) and afternoon (17:00 – 18:00) peak times:

- The current road layout simulating existing traffic flows, congestion and driver behaviour based on detailed traffic surveys undertaken in September 2024; and
- A future road layout with the proposed bus priority measures on Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue. This includes simulating the proposed removal of right turn lanes on Seaside, which has also been raised as a concern, and the resulting effect on driver behaviour.

2.15 The micro-simulation modelling has demonstrated that the loss of on-street parking on Seaside to enable the introduction of the proposed eastbound bus lane will, compared to the current layout have no detrimental impact on general traffic journey times in the morning and afternoon peak times going eastbound (towards Seaside roundabout).

2.16 The modelling identifies that with the Seaside proposals in situ there would be a small increase to journey times for traffic going westbound in both the morning and afternoon peak times. This journey time increase is attributed to the proposed relocation of the pedestrian crossing near Fort Road closer to Seaside roundabout as well as the removal of the right turn pockets for Southbourne Road and Northbourne Road.

2.17 However, the modelling has also indicated that if the following amendments were made to the proposed scheme, then there would be no detriment, and a slight betterment, on vehicle journey times in both the morning and afternoon peak times going westbound by:

- replacing the zebra crossing by Southbourne Road with a traffic signal-controlled crossing;
- retaining a right-hand turn pocket for one vehicle at Southbourne Road; and
- reducing the length of the bus lane on the approach to Northbourne Road to retain a right turn pocket for one vehicle. This would necessitate the loss of on street parking (approximately 3 car lengths).

2.18 It is recommended that subject to the Lead Member's decision these amendments are considered as part of the scheme's detailed design. A summary of the modelling outcome is available at Appendix 3.

Policy Context

2.19 The East Sussex Local Transport Plan (LTP4) covering the period 2024 to 2050 was adopted by the County Council on 8 October 2024. The LTP4 sets the strategy and policy framework for transport in the county for the next 25 years. The adoption of LTP4 follows an extensive consultation and engagement process over the last 2 years which generated over 1,000 consultation responses on the draft strategy which have helped shape the final Plan.

2.20 The LTP's vision is for an inclusive transport system that connects people and places, is decarbonised, safer, resilient, and supports the natural environment, communities, and businesses to be healthy, thrive and prosper. This will be achieved through an increased emphasis on 'planning for people and places'. This means that there will be a focus on enabling and encouraging integrated journeys and reducing the need to travel through land-use and planning policies, focussed on encouraging and enabling inclusive and sustainable travel modes (walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport), adopting vehicles with cleaner fuels alongside the utilisation of emerging transport technologies will help to achieve the Council's and the Council's partners' net-zero ambitions. Therefore, the Council will consider redesigning road space towards providing active travel and public transport infrastructure, whilst also managing competing demands of different road users for this space, rather than explicitly 'planning for vehicles'.

2.21 Several policies in the LTP4 - Policy C1: Inclusive Access; Policy C3 – Bus & Coach; and Policy C6; Public Transport – reference the introduction of bus priority measures as part of the toolkit to support the delivery of the 'Integrated and Accessible Transport for All' LTP4 theme. These policies highlight the benefits that bus priority measures have, as a tool, to improving journey punctuality and reliability of buses and they are vital in enabling faster bus services and making the bus more attractive for more trips to provide another choice to travelling by car. In the context of Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue, the introduction of bus priority measures along this corridor would benefit 1,770 buses weekly across 9 existing bus services carrying at present around 14,000 passengers a week.

2.22 The LTP4 Strategy is supported by an Investment Plan. This sets out the County Council's and the Council's partners' ambitions for delivering the policies and investment priorities to achieve the vision and objectives of LTP4. This includes identified schemes and the types of schemes that the County Council and key partners wish to deliver, subject to funding being secured. Eastbourne urban bus priority and service enhancements, which would include the proposals on the Seaside and St Anthony's corridor, are identified in the Investment Plan for development and delivery in the short term (up to 2030).

2.23 As a result, introducing bus priority measures is integral to delivering the East Sussex LTP4, so that residents can enjoy higher quality bus services that provide a frequent, integrated and comprehensive choice and alternative to the car. In doing so, this will help to support connectivity to key destinations, reduce congestion and strengthen the resilience of the transport network; make a positive contribution towards improving air quality as well as decarbonising transport and travel to support the achievement of the County Council's target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050 at the latest and the Borough Council's same ambition by 2030.

Petitions received by the County Council

2.24 At the County Council meeting on 8 October 2024, 2 petitions were presented to the Chairman regarding the proposals for Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue. Councillor Wright presented a petition in support of the bus priority proposals for Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue which had 494 signatures. Councillor Tutt presented a petition which opposed the bus priority proposals which had 2,531 signatures.

2.25 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. The Chairman has referred these petitions to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment, and these are being considered alongside the consultation outcomes as part of this report. Details of the petitions can be found in Appendix 4. Copies of the petitions are available in the Members' Room.

Next steps

2.26 The County Council has received significant capital funding from Government to deliver bus priority measures in the county. These will support the East Sussex BSIP objectives and are a key tool to delivering the East Sussex LTP4 vision of an inclusive transport system that connects people and places, which will be achieved through an increased emphasis on 'planning for people and places' rather than 'planning for vehicles'.

2.27 Taking into consideration the policy context, the outcomes of the public consultation and feedback, the transport modelling outcomes, the expected benefits for bus users in terms of journey time savings and the indicative costs for continuing to develop and deliver the scheme, it is recommended to proceed with the Seaside and St Anthony's bus priority scheme to detailed design and construction stage in 2025/26.

2.28 Across the package of BSIP bus priority measures the Council will continue to monitor the scope and costs as the programme progresses to construction with a view to ensuring scheme costs stay within the remaining available budget.

Project Adjustment Request

2.29 The outcome of the decision in relation to the Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue bus priority proposals will be subject to the submission of a further Project Adjustment Request (PAR) to the Department for Transport (DfT). The PAR must outline any changes to scope, updated costs and evidence of benefits to bus passengers (i.e. journey saving times).

2.30 If the proposals are agreed, the submitted PAR will also formally seek a spend and delivery extension to March 2026 for all bus priority schemes. The submitted PAR will be considered via the DfT's panel process, and the County Council will be notified of the decision.

3. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 Following receipt of Government funding to deliver the County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan, a package of 7 bus priority schemes were prioritised and put forward for public

consultation between July and September 2023 on the basis that they generated the highest benefits for bus users, could generate additional bus passengers and meet the Department for Transport's delivery timescales. The Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue scheme had the largest proportion of opposing responses, with 70.2% strongly opposing the scheme.

3.2 Following the Lead Member's decision in January 2024 for officers to review the Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue bus priority proposals, a revised design was subject to consultation between 15 July and 18 August 2024. The consultation outcomes, as set out in paragraphs 2.9 to 2.13, highlight that 56% of respondents supported the revised proposals with 37% opposing the revised proposals.

3.3 The outcomes of the traffic modelling demonstrated no detriment to general traffic journey times going eastbound in the morning and afternoon peak times. The modelling also demonstrated that with amendments to the proposed scheme, as set out in paragraph 2.17, there will be no detriment, and a slight betterment, on vehicle journey times travelling westbound in the morning and afternoon peak times. It is recommended that, subject to the Lead Member's decision, these amendments would be considered as part of the scheme's detailed design. In response to the previous feedback on the original proposals, 54% of the on-street parking will be retained on Seaside and 57% on St Anthony's Avenue. This provides a balanced approach to the competing needs for parking, buses and general traffic on the corridor with the delivery of the bus lanes contributing towards achieving the objectives of East Sussex's LTP4 and BSIP.

3.4 Following the County Council meeting on 8 October 2024, the Chairman referred 2 petitions to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment. The petition in support of the bus lane has 494 signatures and the petition opposing the bus lane has 2,531 signatures. The Lead Member for Transport and Environment is recommended to advise petitioners that the issues raised by both petitions relating to bus priority proposals for Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue have been reviewed and considered alongside the consultation outcomes as part of this report.

3.5 The Lead Member for Transport and Environment is therefore recommended to note consultation outcomes for the revised proposal for Seaside and St Anthony's and approve the recommendation to proceed with the Seaside and St Anthony's bus priority scheme to detailed design and construction stage in 2025/26.

3.6 It is also recommended to delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport in consultation with the Lead Member for Transport and Environment to approve the final content of the Project Adjustment Request submitted to the Department for Transport.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillors di Cara, Holt, Tutt

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021 - eastsussex.gov.uk/media/znybvybw/east-sussex-county-council-bus-service-improvement-plan-2021.pdf