

18 June 2015**Agenda Item: 6****REPORT OF SERVICE, DIRECTOR HIGHWAYS****KIRKBY TOWN CENTRE TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENT SCHEME****Purpose of the Report**

1. To consider and approve the delivery of the proposed Kirkby Town Centre traffic improvement scheme considering the objections received in respect of the proposed related Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) and whether the Orders should be made as advertised.

Information and Advice**Background on scheme development**

2. Kirkby in Ashfield is a small town located approximately four miles south-west of Mansfield town centre. The town has a historic road network; many of the town centre roads are relatively narrow and there is competition for highway space between the differing transport modes and highway users, such as businesses, through-traffic, visitors, shoppers and residents. There have been on-going issues with vehicle journey time delays in the town and a number of schemes have been implemented historically to attempt to address this. However, discussions with Ashfield District Council, the public and other stakeholders has identified that concerns regarding journey time delays persist, especially westbound along Station Street.
3. In response to these concerns the County Council has worked in partnership with Ashfield District Council to undertake feasibility work on several options to improve traffic flows along Station Street. Large scale infrastructure improvement options have been ruled out in the short to medium-term due to the cost and lack of currently available funding for any such schemes, coupled with the long timescale they take to develop and construct. A number of schemes that were considered have also been ruled out as they would either worsen traffic flows or are not feasible.
4. Discussions between local County Council members, District Council members, district council and highway officers identified two potential options that are considered feasible and potentially deliverable within the available funding level and timescale to deliver:
 - The relocation of the bus stops on Station Street adjacent to the Nags Head junction further west on Station Street to existing parking laybys; and
 - Changes to the traffic flows and routing of traffic around Kirkby town centre which would allow the relocation of two bus stops from their current location on Station Street to Ellis Street and Pond Street to ease queuing traffic at key junctions on Station Street.

5. A detailed analysis of the benefits and drawbacks of each option which concluded that whilst the relocation of the bus stops further west on Station Street delivers small benefits relating to traffic flows it would require the removal of a large number of parking spaces on Station Street which could potentially impact on the local businesses. Such a scheme would also inconvenience public transport users as the stops would be further from the main part of the town centre. It was therefore determined, in consultation with Ashfield District Council, that this option would not be pursued further.

Preferred option

6. Changes to the traffic flows and routing of traffic around Kirkby town centre delivers more benefits relating to improved traffic flows along Station Street and retains most of the parking along Station Street. It will also enable the bus stops to be located close to the civic square, although the stops will no longer be 'paired'. The proposed scheme will also remove the reported traffic conflict that currently occurs on Pond Street due to parking and two-way traffic flows. The proposed scheme involves the following highway changes and a plan of Kirkby town centre and the proposed scheme is attached as appendix 1 (although it should be noted that the scheme may be subject to small changes as part of the detailed design):

Alterations to moving traffic

Ellis Street

- Reversal of traffic flows on Ellis Street – all vehicles (including those accessing/exiting the public car park) will only be able to travel southbound as opposed to northbound currently
- Ellis Street will also be widened near its junction with the public car park to enable vehicles to overtake waiting buses
- Banning the right turn out of Ellis Street onto Station Street for southbound vehicles

Pond Street

- Pond Street becoming one-way eastbound to cater for traffic travelling north from Station Street.

Station Street

- Removal of the right-turn lane on Station Street at its junction with Ellis Street as vehicles will no longer be able to travel north along Ellis Street
- A new right-turn lane for westbound traffic at the traffic signals at the Station Street/Portland Street junction.
- Yellow box junctions on Station Street at its junctions with Portland Street and Lindley's Lane and at the Morley Street/Kingsway junction.

Alterations to parking and waiting

Ellis Street

- One bus stop serving buses travelling north being relocated from Ellis Street to Pond Street (near its junction with Ellis Street)

Pond Street

- Whilst the majority of the residents parking will be retained on Pond Street (13 of the existing 15 spaces will be retained), the limited waiting on-street parking on the south of the road will be removed to enable all sized vehicles to travel freely – resulting in the loss of approximately four 1 hour limited parking spaces

Station Street

- The provision of the right-turn lane at Portland Street junction requires the shortening of two on-street parking bays on Station Street to accommodate the change – resulting in the total loss of approximately two 1 hour limited parking spaces
 - Two bus stops serving buses travelling east being relocated from Station Street (outside the Nags Head) to Ellis Street (adjacent to the Civic Square).
7. Traffic modelling and reassignments suggest that the proposed scheme should bring some journey time improvements to the critical section of Station Road between Ellis Street and Kingsway in both the peak and non-peak hours. This will be achieved through the proposals relieving the existing pressure caused by queuing traffic thereby enabling journeys in both directions to flow more freely.
8. The journey time improvements should be achieved through a combination of the proposed highway changes and therefore it should be noted that the all the proposals detailed above would need to be delivered and could not be implemented in part or isolation. The journey time improvements are expected as:
- There will be sufficient room for vehicles travelling westbound on Station Street to be able to pass waiting buses outside the Nags Head
 - Capacity at some traffic signal controlled junctions will be increased for vehicles travelling along Station Street.
9. Bus passengers will be dropped off and picked up adjacent to the new 'civic square' increasing footfall through the square; providing an enhanced pedestrian route to the town centre as well as potentially adding value to this community space.
10. The scheme does, however, have some drawbacks, particularly:
- The residents of Pond Street and Portland Street will experience increases of all vehicles (buses, cars and HGVs) due to the highway changes as vehicles travelling north from Station Street will no longer be able to use Ellis Street
 - The businesses located close to the bus stops on Station Street could potentially lose 'waiting' trade when the bus stops are relocated
 - The relocated bus stops will no longer be paired which passengers may find confusing.
11. A public meeting to discuss the scheme proposals was held on 21st January 2015 to highlight the benefits and drawbacks of the scheme as part of the scheme development prior to the formal Traffic Regulation Order consultation. The public meeting discussed the scheme benefits and drawbacks in detail, as well as a number of the options that had been considered but not taken forward. The main concerns raised at the meeting are as follows and those directly related to the proposed Traffic Regulation Order are considered in this report in the response to objections to the associated traffic regulation orders:
- the increased traffic volumes on Pond Street and this has resulted in a petition from the residents of Pond Street opposing the scheme
 - the relocation of the bus stops and the fact that the bus stops would not be paired which was specifically raised by bus operators
 - concern about HGVs being able to access business premises on Pond Street and Ellis Street.

12. There was also concern about traffic impacts of likely future new development around the town; and requests for a major scheme such as a bypass. Ashfield District Council as planning authority, with advice from the County Council on transport matters, will consider the impacts of any new development in the district and secure measures (or funding to deliver those measures) to mitigate against impacts of future developments. The County Council will be undertaking a review of its major transport scheme priorities in the near future, having regard for economic priorities in the county as well as the evidence base of existing transport conditions across the county. Future major transport schemes in Kirkby in Ashfield will be considered along with all other areas in the county as part of this review.
13. Following the open meeting and subsequent discussions with Ashfield District Council members and officers, it was decided to progress with the consultation on the Traffic Regulation Orders required to implement the scheme to determine the public's views on the proposals and the outcome of this consultation is detailed below.

Consideration of objections to proposed traffic regulation orders

14. The initial consultation took place between 15th January 2015 and 13th February 2015. During this consultation period a total of six responses were received, which included a petition comprising 32 signatures. Of these responses three are considered to be outstanding objections. In response to one objection the proposals were amended to remove a proposed extension to a residents' parking bay on Pond Street to facilitate access to a business' driveway. In response to further comments the extents of parking bays on Station Street, adjacent to the Portland Street junction were shortened. This was considered necessary to allow large vehicles to turn left out of Portland Street whilst maintaining sufficient highway space in the centre of the road to accommodate the right-turn lane for vehicles turning right from Station Street.
15. The amended proposals were publically advertised between 9th March 2015 and 10th April 2015 and can be seen on the attached appendices. A further three responses were received, all of which were considered as objections.
16. A total of nine responses were received to the proposals. Replies have been sent direct to all respondents and of these six are considered to be outstanding objections to some or all of the proposals.
17. Objection – Increased traffic levels on Pond Street.
The common theme of four outstanding objections (including the petition) was that the alterations would significantly increase traffic levels, including HGV traffic, on Pond Street and that the street was unsuitable for such an increase.

Response

The town centre road network is constrained by the historic layout of streets and buildings which limits how the highway can meet the needs of a modern town centre. None of the town centre roads are significantly better able to cope with current traffic flows than any other and within town centres there are always competing demands on the highway between the needs of different users. The primary purpose of the Highway is for the movement of people and vehicles and this must supersede secondary purposes such as parking.

The County Council has received a number of complaints from residents of Pond Street regarding increases in traffic and damage to parked cars as vehicles currently fail to 'give and take' appropriately in narrow sections of Pond Street. The proposal to make Pond Street one-way will address this conflict between eastbound and westbound traffic and it is anticipated that this will reduce occurrences of damage to parked cars.

It is recognised that traffic flows on Pond Street will increase, however the removal of potential conflict between two-way traffic is expected to mitigate against any increased risk to road safety. In addition the operation of the traffic signalled junctions at Portland Street/Station Street and the uncontrolled junction at Pond Street / Portland Street will provide 'gaps' in vehicles flows sufficient for pedestrian crossing movements.

The potential for a town centre environmental weight limit has been considered, but due to the number of businesses in the centre of Kirkby which would legitimately require HGV access and so be exempt from the order it is not considered feasible to introduce such an order as enforcement would be effectively impossible.

All HGVs are currently able to access Pond Street from Portland Street but the proposed scheme will improve this manoeuvre by removing some of the parking at the junction.

18. Objection – lack of pedestrian crossing point

The petition received stated that the proposals contained no provision for a pedestrian crossing.

Response

Pedestrian crossing facilities are available on Portland Street at the signalled crossing. On Pond Street it is expected that the operation of the traffic signalled junctions at Portland Street/Station Street and the uncontrolled junction at Pond Street/Portland Street will provide 'gaps' in vehicles flows sufficient for pedestrian crossing movements. The carriageway at the northern end of Ellis Street (near the junction with Pond Street) will be narrowed to provide an uncontrolled crossing point for pedestrians to access the civic square and town centre.

19. Objection – bus stops not 'paired'

Two respondents, one being the bus operator, objected on the basis that the bus stops would not be closely 'paired' (this is defined as being in easy view of each other). The respondents state that moving a long established stop in isolation to its 'pair' will create customer dissatisfaction and that potential bus users are put off when they cannot clearly see how to make their return journey.

Response

The preference for paired stops is recognised by the County Council, but it is not always possible to accommodate the needs and requirements of all highway users within the constraints of the existing highway network. Non-paired stops are in frequent use in other towns and cities, predominately in areas with one-way roads. The location of the 'paired' stop will be clearly signposted at each stop to assist users in making their journeys.

The County Council has received complaints over a number of years regarding congestion in Kirkby affecting the punctuality of buses. It is considered that the proposed changes to the town centre network would improve traffic flow along Station Road in both directions and

offer improved punctuality and reliability for the bus services. The relocation of the bus stop to Ellis Street will mean that passengers using two of the most regular bus services in the town will be dropped off and collected right in the heart of Kirkby, adjacent to the new Civic Square. This offers a step-free, visually inviting route into the town centre, which does not involve crossing any roads. It is anticipated that these benefits will off-set any disadvantage to bus users as a result of splitting the pairing of stops.

20. Objection – access difficulties for Kirkby Community Transport Scheme

The community organisation operating the scheme objected on the basis that the introduction of a bus stop on Pond Street and the extension of a residents' parking bay would make it difficult for them to turn into the area where Kirkby Community Transport scheme store their vehicles on Pond Street.

Response

The proposals were modified as a result of this objection and the proposed extension of the residents' parking bay dropped. The introduction of a bus stop will not significantly affect access into the driveway as it does not extend over the dropped kerb. The bus stop will be a clearway, which means waiting is prohibited for all vehicles except buses. It is expected the stop would be used by 2 bus services; the Black Cat and the service 90, in a northbound direction only, so a bus will be at the stop only a few times an hour. As such the introduction of a clearway here should facilitate access to their parking area as it removes parking in the vicinity of the access and so improves visibility and turning space.

21. Objection – removal of on-street parking

Two objectors stated that the restrictions would reduce the availability of on-street parking.

Response

The purpose of the reduction of the Station Road parking bay is to ensure sufficient carriageway is available at the Portland Street / Station Street junction to enable the safe movement of large HGV vehicles when turning out of Portland Street into Station Street. This alteration will be required to ensure that these turning movements will not conflict with vehicles waiting in the proposed right-turn lane for westbound vehicles turning into Portland Street. The primary purpose of the highway is to facilitate the movement of people and vehicles. However it is recognised that parking on the highway does occur, and that the availability of this parking is important to households and businesses in the immediate area. As such the reduction in the parking bay has been kept to the minimum possible extent required to ensure the safe operation of the junction. On-street parking remains available in the rest of the parking bay and further along both sides of Station Street.

The removal of two parking bays on Pond Street was necessary to accommodate the new bus stop and turning movements into Pond Street from Portland Street. It is considered that sufficient capacity exists in the remaining Residents' Parking bays to accommodate the loss of the 2 spaces in the western residents' parking bay. It was not possible to accommodate any short-stay parking on Pond Street, however town centre parking is available in the car park on Ellis Street and nearby on-street parking is available on Station Street, Portland Street, Lowmoor Road and Sherwood Street.

22. Objection – manoeuvring of 40ft delivery HGVs into Ellis Street Service yard

An objector also stated his concern regarding the ability of HGVs to access Ellis Street Service yard.

Response

The scheme designer has met with business operators who use the Ellis Street service yard. Delivery lorries to Boyes and Farmfoods currently reverse into the yard and this manoeuvre is worsened by the change in the one-way direction of Ellis Street, as vehicles will now need to reverse on the off-side. This manoeuvre has been discussed with the County Council's crash reduction team, who advise that the yard owners should investigate whether any accommodation can be made to allow all HGVs to turn around in the yard (i.e. remove parked cars) or provide a banksman to avoid the reversing altogether.

Other Options Considered

23. A number of options for transport improvements have been considered in Kirkby in Ashfield and ruled out. Whilst some options are simply not feasible, several options have been ruled out due to the fact they would make traffic worse on Station Street.

Comments from Local Members

24. County Councillor John Knight is in support of the proposals and has been involved in their development, County Councillor Rachel Madden has not commented on the proposals.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

25. The proposed scheme and the restrictions necessary to implement the scheme are considered appropriate taking into account a balanced view of the needs of all road users and supported by a local County Councillor.

Statutory and Policy Implications

26. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. An equality impact assessment has been undertaken on the scheme and it shows no adverse impacts. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Crime and Disorder Implications

27. Nottinghamshire Police raised no objections to the proposals.

Financial Implications

28. The total budget for the proposed scheme is £500,000 and will be jointly funded by Ashfield District Council and Nottinghamshire County Council. Nottinghamshire County Council has allocated up to £250,000 from its integrated transport block funding allocation. The integrated transport block funding allocation was approved at the 26th February 2015 County Council meeting; and the £250,000 allocation towards the Kirkby Town Centre improvement scheme was subsequently approved at the 19th March 2015 Transport & Highways Committee.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) It is recommended that Committee:
 - a) approve that the Nottinghamshire County Council [(Kirkby In Ashfield Town Centre) - (Prohibition Of Waiting And Parking Places) (4162) and (One Way Streets And Prohibition Of Movements) (4163)] Traffic Regulation Orders 2015 be made as advertised and that the objectors be informed accordingly
 - b) approve the delivery of the proposed Kirkby Town Centre traffic improvement scheme as set out in this report and its appendices.

Neil Hodgson
Interim Service Director Highways

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Sean Parks – Local Transport Plan manager
Helen North – Improvements manager

Tel: 0115 977 4251
Tel: 0115 977 2087

Constitutional Comments (SLB 21/05/2015)

29. Transport and Highways Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Financial Comments (GB 04/06/2015)

30. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 28. A variation to the capital programme is required to incorporate Ashfield District Council's contribution into the County Council capital programme.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- All relevant documents for the proposed scheme are contained within the scheme file which can be found in the Major Projects and Improvements Team at Trent Bridge House, Fox Road, West Bridgford NG2 6BJ.
- Nottinghamshire County Council Annual Budget Report 2015/16 – 26th February 2015

- Integrated transport and highway maintenance capital programmes 2015/16 Transport & Highways Committee report – 19th March 2015

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

Kirkby in Ashfield North – Councillor John Knight
Kirkby in Ashfield South – Councillor Rachel Madden