

REPORT TO CABINET

Title: **WINDSOR TRAFFIC CONSULTATIONS
(Peascod Street & Thames Street)**

Date: 28 January 2010

Member Reporting: Councillor Rayner, Lead Member for Highways and Streetcare

Contact Officer(s): Ben Smith, Highway Services Manager

Wards Affected: This report will have direct, or indirect impact on all wards within the Windsor, Eton & Datchet area

1. SUMMARY

PEASCOD STREET: A public consultation was undertaken in October / November 2009 to consider relocating the bus stop in Peascod Street to Charles Street, thereby enabling the creation of a pedestrian area helping to foster a cosmopolitan café culture.

The excellent response rate to the consultation demonstrates considerable local interest with significant local opposition (particularly from bus users), and considerable support (particularly from local business).

Due to the effectiveness of the recently reintroduced 'rising' bollard and the results of the public consultation it is recommended that the bus stop be retained as existing and no further action be taken with respect to this proposal.

THAMES STREET: A public consultation exercise was undertaken in October / November 2009 to consider two options to improve traffic conditions around Windsor Royal Theatre with an objective of reducing congestion and supporting the vitality of the town centre.

The good response rate to the consultation exercise indicates high levels of local interest and a clear desire (86%) that measures should be taken to improve traffic conditions in Thames Street in front of Windsor Theatre Royal.

The one-way solution received a majority of support and it is recommended that this scheme be developed further in a 'desktop' environment and the effects fully evaluated. The outcome of this exercise will be reported to a future 'Cabinet Prioritisation Sub-Committee for consideration.

2. RECOMMENDATION: That:

PEASCOD STREET

- i) **the bus stop in Peascod Street be retained as existing and no further action be taken with respect to this proposal**

THAMES STREET

- ii) the results of the public consultation be noted
- iii) the main proposal be agreed in principle and developed further to fully evaluate the effect on traffic flows
- iv) the inclusion of £40,000 in the draft capital programme for 2010/11 be supported to progress this project to the next stage with the outcome reported to a future meeting of the Cabinet Prioritisation Sub-Committee

What will be different for residents as a result of this decision?
<p>The recommendations of this report reaffirm the Royal Boroughs commitment to public consultation and engagement with the public in decision making.</p> <p>Retention of the bus stop in Peascod Street supports bus users and encourages further use by providing priority and prominence to local bus services</p> <p>Traffic conditions around Windsor Theatre Royal and, the wider Windsor area, will be improved, thereby reducing congestion and improving journey times.</p>

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Background

The purpose of this report is to consider the results of the recent public consultation exercises relating to:

(a) Relocation of the bus stop and extension of the pedestrian area in Peascod Street, Windsor

(b) Traffic improvements in Thames Street, Windsor

PEASCOD STREET:

This proposal seeks to relocate the existing bus stop at the lower end of Peascod Street to Charles Street, thereby enabling the creation of a predominantly traffic free area, linking the pedestrian zones to the north and south.

Traffic in this area is currently restricted to emergency services and buses (at any time) and deliveries (6am to 11am and 4pm to 8pm). These restrictions are controlled by the recently reintroduced 'rising' bollard which has significantly reduced the levels of illegal traffic and parking in the area.

However, removal of the buses and the relocation of the bus stop would enable a pedestrian area to be created promoting a more cosmopolitan café culture.

A copy of the consultation article which was included in the Autumn 2009 edition of Around the Royal Borough is reproduced as Appendix A which sets out the background to this proposal, together with a plan.

Set out below are a summary of key technical factors affecting this proposal:

- removal of a majority of vehicles will enable the creation of a pedestrian area which will support the vitality of the town centre, local retailers and create space to introduce a cosmopolitan café culture
- the existing bus stop is very well used and is served by 4 - 6 buses an hour delivering passengers into the 'heart' of the town centre
- visibility of bus services is a critical factor is promoting their use as an alternative to the private car
- the alternative bus stop location in Charles Street is on the edge of the retail area and walking distances to the shops will be extended
- creation of a new bus stop and layby will require the removal of approximately 10 residents parking spaces
- access for emergency services and essential deliveries (where no alternative exists) must be retained, therefore the extended pedestrian area should be designed in a manner to retain this access
- proposals are currently being developed to reduce the times available for essential deliveries, and restrict the size of vehicles, using the upper end of Peascod Street. The revised arrangements could be extended into the lower end of Peascod Street to further reduce vehicle movements

THAMES STREET:

This proposal seeks to introduce changes to the existing traffic flow in the area around Windsor Theatre Royal. Two proposals are being considered:

- (i) The main proposal is the introduction of a one-way system
- (ii) The alternative proposal is the removal of the bus lane in front of Windsor Theatre Royal, thereby enabling a majority of vehicles to travel westbound in front of the theatre and southbound in front of the Windsor Castle and the Guildhall

The scheme has been developed as part of the Royal Boroughs commitment to easing congestion in the Windsor area and supporting the vitality of the town centre.

A copy of the consultation article which was included in the Autumn 2009 edition of Around the Royal Borough is reproduced as Appendix B which sets out the background to this proposal, together with a plan.

Set out below are a summary of key technical factors affecting this proposal:

- Implementation of both the main, and alternative, proposals will remove the priority currently enjoyed by buses to the area in front of the theatre and Windsor Castle
- Allowing a majority of vehicles to travel westbound in front of the theatre and southbound in front of Windsor Castle will significantly increase traffic

volumes in this area which is heavily used by visitors and pedestrians increasing the risk of pedestrian / vehicle collisions

- Allowing a majority of vehicles to travel westbound in front of the theatre and southbound in front of Windsor Castle will reduce traffic volumes using other areas of the town, thereby reducing congestion
- Increased traffic volumes in front of the Windsor Theatre Royal and Windsor Castle will increase short-term queuing at the bus stops whilst passengers board / alight buses and vehicles cannot pass.
- Increased traffic volumes in front of Windsor Castle may require relocation of the 'Sightseeing' bus stop as this will obstruct increased traffic flows
- The revised arrangements will increase capacity and reduce congestion around the theatre. The revised arrangements will be beneficial on a daily basis but will also be useful in managing traffic for particular events
- The one-way proposal will address the congestion currently generated by the large vehicles which serve the rear of the theatre for considerable lengths of time to load / unload
- Encouraging vehicles into the town centre may encourage trade and assist in supporting the vitality of the town and local retailers
- The implementation of any proposal must be carefully managed to minimise disruption, and ensure that conflicts with events and other major roadworks (such as Windsor & Eton Relief Road) are minimised
- The effect on pedestrian movements from Eton to Windsor will also require careful consideration to ensure that safe and convenient crossing points continue to be available

Both of these proposals have been the subject of debate for a number of years and a conscious decision was made to fully engage with the community and undertake an extensive consultation exercise using a variety of formats. An excellent response was received, the results of which is set out in Section 5. ('Consultation Carried Out') of this report.

PEASCOD STREET: the excellent response rate to the consultation exercise demonstrates considerable local interest with significant local opposition (particularly from local bus users), and considerable support (particularly from local business).

However, due to the effectiveness of the recently reintroduced 'rising' bollard and the results of the public consultation it is recommended that the bus stop be retained as existing and no further action be taken with respect to this proposal.

THAMES STREET: the good response rate to the consultation exercise indicates high levels of local interest and a clear desire (86%) that measures should be taken to improve traffic conditions in Thames Street in front of Windsor Theatre Royal.

With respect to the two options proposed, there is greater support for the main proposal. However, this area is critical to traffic movements and it is essential to fully understand the impact prior to implementation. Therefore, the following is recommended:

- the results of the public consultation be noted

- the main proposal be agreed in principle and developed further to fully evaluate the effect on traffic flows
- the inclusion of £40,000 in the draft capital programme for 2010/11 be supported to progress this project to the next stage with the outcome reported to a future meeting of the Cabinet Prioritisation Sub-Committee

To progress to the next stage, various scenarios will be tested using the Royal Boroughs traffic model. This exercise will be undertaken in the next 6 weeks and will cost in the region of £3000 - £5000 which will be funded from existing budgets.

The outcome of this exercise will be reported to a future Cabinet Prioritisation Sub-Committee to consider the 'Way Forward' with respect to design, budgets and timing.

4. OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 Options (PEASCOD STREET)

	Option	Comments	Financial Implications
1.	Do-nothing	This option is recommended in line with the results of the public consultation	None
2.	Relocate the bus stop from Peascod Street to Charles Street whilst retaining the existing streetscape layout	This option is not recommended due to the results of the public consultation	Capital funding of circa. £80,000 will be required to deliver this option which is not included in the current capital programme
3.	Relocate the bus stop from Peascod Street to Charles Street and enhance the streetscene to promote a cosmopolitan café culture	This option is not recommended due to the results of the public consultation	Capital funding of £250,000 - £600,000 will be required to deliver this option (dependant upon the extent and specification) which is not included in the current capital programme

4.2 Risk assessment

The following significant risks associated with the recommended option have been identified:

- Whilst there is considerable public support for the recommended option, there is a high risk that the supporters of the scheme (particularly the Windsor Chamber of Commerce) will be dissatisfied with the outcome
- Whilst there have been no recorded personal injury accidents in this area the recommended option retains traffic volumes at existing levels and does not reduce the risk of vehicle / pedestrian collisions. However, the risk could be further minimised if times available for deliveries, and the size of vehicles permissible, was reduced

4.3 Options (THAMES STREET)

	Option	Comments	Financial Implications
1.	Do-nothing	This option is not recommended due to the response from the public consultation that ' <i>...measures should be taken to improve traffic conditions...</i> '	None
2.	Agree the main proposal in principle and undertake a full 'desktop' evaluation for consideration at a future Cabinet Prioritisation Sub-Committee	This option is recommended as it responds positively to the outcome of the public consultation and allows the full impact to be considered prior to implementation	£40,000 is included in the draft capital programme for 2010/11. Subject to approval, this will be adequate to progress this option
3.	Implement the main proposal ('One- Way' system) as set out in Appendix B on an experimental basis and monitor the effect	Whilst there is significant support for the 'one-way' option, an experimental scheme is not recommended until a desktop evaluation has been undertaken and the implications fully evaluated	£40,000 is included in the draft capital programme for 2010/11. Subject to approval, this will be adequate to progress this option
4.	Implement the main proposal ('One- Way' system) as set out in Appendix B on a permanent basis	Whilst there is significant support for the 'one-way' option, implementation is not recommended until a desktop evaluation has been undertaken and the implications fully evaluated	Capital funding of circa. £125,000 will be required to deliver this option, which is not included in the current capital programme
5.	Implement the alternative proposal on an experimental, or permanent basis	This option is not recommended as it is not consistent with the response from the public consultation and a desktop evaluation is recommended prior to implementation of any proposal	£40,000 is included in the draft capital programme for 2010/11. Subject to approval, this would be adequate to progress this option
6.	Prepare and implement a new alternative proposal	This option is not recommended as it may attract criticism about the current public consultation and the two currently proposed options represent an effective opportunity to deliver congestion benefits	The financial implications of this option cannot be quantified until a new alternative proposal is conceived

4.4 Risk assessment

The following significant risks associated with the recommended option have been identified:

- A full 'desktop' analysis will enable the effects to be fully evaluated. However, the outcome will be based on theoretical modelling using sample traffic data, not 'on the ground' analysis
- There may be a significant increase in traffic travelling past Windsor Castle. Coupled with the high levels of pedestrian activity in this area the risk of pedestrian / vehicle collision will increase
- Whilst public support for the recommended option is demonstrated through the public consultation, continued support of the community and all stakeholders is essential if the project is to be successful
- There are key stakeholders, identified through the consultation process who will be dissatisfied with the recommendation to implement the 'one-way' system
- The recommended solution is contrary to planning policy embedded in the local plan
- Implementation of this scheme will require a new 'Traffic Regulation Order'. If objections are received implementation will be delayed and may generate negative publicity
- The implementation of this scheme is relatively complex with respect to altering traffic flows, traffic regulation orders etc. If unforeseen engineering difficulties are encountered the implementation period will be extended causing potential disruption of key times
- The implementation of any proposal must be carefully managed to minimise disruption, and ensure that conflicts with events and other major roadworks (such as Windsor & Eton Relief Road) are minimised

5. CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT

5.1 An extensive public consultation exercise was undertaken October / November 2009 which included the following elements:

- publication of an article and questionnaire (on both projects) in the Autumn 2009 edition of 'Around the Royal Borough' delivered to more than 60,000 homes
- publication of the article and questionnaire on the Royal Boroughs website with the facility to complete the questionnaire online
- 206 on-street surveys securing views from both bus users and non-bus users
- 50 telephone surveys were conducted with local businesses
- Written consultation with formal stakeholders (eg. Windsor & District Chamber of Commerce; local bus operators)
- Engagement with the press and local media to raise awareness of the consultation exercise and to seek feedback
- Engagement with Windsor Town Forum

All responses have been analysed and summarised and the headlines are set out below. A full copy of the results are available as a background paper to this report.

5.2 PEASCOD STREET

A total of 644 **questionnaires** responses were received:

- 62% disagree with the relocation of the bus stop from Peascod Street to Charles Street
- 40% support the potential for additional pedestrianisation in Peascod Street
- 38% think the proposal will provide a better, safer environment for shoppers and visitors
- 61% think that the current traffic restrictions (using the rising bollard) are enough

A total of 206 **on-street surveys** were undertaken:

- 25% are very supportive or quite supportive of relocating the bus stop / 25% neither support nor against / 50% not very or not at all supportive
- 44% strongly agree / agree that relocating the bus stop will provide a better, safer environment for shoppers and visitors
- 47% strongly agree / agree that relocating the bus stop will help foster a cosmopolitan café culture that will draw more people to this part of the town
- 53% strongly agree / agree that the current restrictions, using the rising bollard, are enough and relocating the bus stop is unnecessary
- 60% strongly agree / agree that moving the bus stop would cause serious inconvenience to bus passengers

A total of 50 **telephone surveys** were undertaken with local businesses

- 58% are very supportive or quite supportive of relocating the bus stop / 34% neither support nor against / 8% not very or not at all supportive
- 76% strongly agree / agree that relocating the bus stop will provide a better, safer environment for shoppers and visitors
- 74% strongly agree / agree that relocating the bus stop will help foster a cosmopolitan café culture that will draw more people to this part of the town
- 30% strongly agree / agree that the current restrictions, using the rising bollard, are enough and relocating the bus stop is unnecessary
- 20% strongly agree / agree that moving the bus stop would cause serious inconvenience to bus passengers

Additionally, a **petition** (*'...We, the undersigned bus users, strongly object to the proposal to relocate Peascod Street bus stop to Charles Street...'*) containing 1351 signatures was presented by Councillor Mrs Endacott in two parts to the Windsor Town Forum and Council respectively.

A **petition** was also received from local businesses (*'...Do you think Lower Peascod Street would become safer, more environmentally friendly and pleasant place to shop if it was completely traffic free...'*) containing 426 signatures.

A **letter** supporting the proposal was received from 'Windsor District Chamber of Commerce' and letters of opposition were received from 'First' buses and West Windsor Residents Association.

5.3 THAMES STREET

A total of 271 **questionnaires** responses were received:

- 86% agree that measures to improve traffic in Thames Street (in front of the Windsor Theatre Royal) are required
- 65% support the main proposal
- 38% support the alternative proposal
- 66% think the main proposal will have the greatest benefit; 26% think the alternative proposal will have the greatest benefit whilst 8% don't know

No on-street interviews or telephone surveys were undertaken as part of this specific consultation due to the nature of the project and those most affected are likely to be motorists from a wide area.

No petitions were received. However, letters of support were received from Windsor District Chamber of Commerce; individuals within Eton Town Council and one local Councillor. A letter of opposition was also received from a local resident.

'First' buses responded to the consultation and are supportive of the main one-way proposal with the caveat that southbound access in front of the castle be restricted to buses and taxis only (as existing).

6. COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

- 6.1 The Planning & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Panel will consider this report on Monday 25th January 2010 and the outcome will be report verbally to Cabinet on Thursday 28th January 2010.

7. IMPLICATIONS

The following implications have been addressed where indicated below.

Financial	Legal	Human Rights Act	Planning	Sustainable Development	Diversity & Equality
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A

Background Papers:

- Consultation results