

Subject:	Old Town Transport Plan		
Date of Meeting:	2 October 2012		
Report of:	Strategic Director, Place		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Tom Campbell	Tel: 29-3328
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Ward(s) affected:	Regency		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 The Old Town is the area situated between North Street, West Street, East Street, and the seafront. It forms the historic core of Brighton, but its development around centuries-old street layouts mean that the area is not ideal for motorised traffic. Over the decades the amount of traffic has continually increased with the result that the current volume of traffic detracts from the character of the area.
- 1.2 This report recommends traffic management improvements in the Old Town that seek to reduce the volume of traffic in the area whilst retaining access for those that require it.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Officers are authorised to advertise the relevant Traffic Regulation Orders.
- 2.2 That Officers are requested to implement the Old Town Transport Plan as detailed in the report.
- 2.3 That Officers are requested to investigate the feasibility of further improvements to traffic flow and loading arrangements in the Old Town.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The Old Town Transport Plan is a continuation of the council's Walking Network programme.
- 3.2 The proposal for a Walking Network was initially agreed by Policy & Resources Committee as part of a package of capital schemes in the previous Local Transport Plan 2006/7-2010/11.
- 3.3 The first phase focussed on King's Road between Middle Street and Black Lion Street and was implemented in early 2009. The second phase involved closing

the southern end of East Street to traffic and installing a new pedestrian crossing across the A259. It was implemented in Spring 2012.

- 3.4 In September 2009 Cabinet approved *‘the commencement of feasibility, design and consultation of a Phase 3 which will examine the potential of further measures in the East Street area.’* Through early feasibility work it became apparent that any changes to traffic management in East Street would have significant implications for the surrounding area. Therefore it was felt that the scheme needed to consider traffic management in the Old Town as a whole.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Two traffic management options were put forward for public consultation. Both involved closing the junction of Ship Street and North Street to reduce levels of through traffic. Option A involved restricting all motor vehicles other than those which legitimately required access from entering the Old Town. Option B retained the right for all traffic to enter the area but used traffic management changes to reduce the amount of traffic that would use the area. A ‘do nothing’ option was also available.
- 4.2 A copy of the consultation material is attached as Appendix 1.
- 4.3 A public consultation on the plans was carried out from 14th June until 27th July 2012. Information leaflets and questionnaires were mailed to 2436 property addresses. 1436 of these were in the local area. As the area is important for its historic character, a further 1000 consultation packs were sent to random city-wide addresses.
- 4.4 Two public exhibitions were held in the local area at:
- Friends Meeting House, Ship Street, Thursday 14 June, 12 noon-8pm and Saturday 16 June, 9am to 5pm
 - Bartholomew House, Bartholomew Square, Thursday 28 June, 8.45am to 4.45pm
- 4.5 The consultation was also advertised on the BHCC’s website and Twitter feed. It was featured on BBC TV news, BBC radio and in the Evening Argus, where it was the most popular story on the Argus website for 2 days. Stakeholder groups were also sent information.
- 4.6 565 responses were received, 197 of these (35%) were received on-line through the council’s consultation portal and 368 (65%) were survey forms returned by mail or collected at public exhibitions.
- 4.7 Response rate from the mailing was approximately 16.5% which is an average response rate for a consultation. 17% of the total number of respondents were residents of the Old Town.
- 4.8 Consultation Results
The main findings of the consultation were:

- 66% were in favour of a traffic improvement scheme (either Option A or Option B)
- Amongst businesses 50% favoured a traffic improvement scheme and 50% wanted no change.
- Amongst residents of the Old Town, 55% wanted a new scheme.
- Of the 2 options, Option A (45%) was more popular than Option B (21%).
- In general people would like vehicular access (for those with legitimate reason to enter the area) to be permitted at all times. If there were to be a timed restriction the most popular times to ban cars were during the middle of the day.
- The majority of respondents favoured the closure of Boyce's Street to traffic.

4.9 The full consultation report is attached as Appendix 2.

4.10 The Old Town Transport Plan proposals

In light of the consultation results it is recommended that officers are requested to proceed with the scheme outlined below. A plan of the proposed scheme is attached as Appendix 3.

4.11 It is recommended that the junction of Ship Street and North Street is closed to vehicles.

4.12 Access to the Old Town will be via Middle Street and Black Lion Street.

4.13 East Street

During consultation requests were received from a number of businesses on East Street for a full closure of the street to traffic during part of the day. Local businesses feel that creating a traffic-free street will improve the character of the street, which will in turn increase footfall and benefit their businesses.

4.14 Currently a number of licensed businesses on East Street are subject to conditions around the time at which they can remove waste to avoid disturbance to neighbours. If a timed closure were introduced this would reduce the time window in which they could remove waste and issues arising from this may need to be considered.

4.15 It is recommended that East Street (between Kings Road and Bartholomews) is closed to all vehicles between 11am and 7pm daily.

4.16 Boyce's Street

As noted earlier 67% of respondents favoured the closure of Boyce's Street to traffic. A petition was also received from a number of businesses and residents of the road requesting the street be pedestrianised. Middle Street School were a signatory of the petition and it is considered that closing Boyce's Street would improve safety for pupils of the school.

4.17 Closing Boyce's street was opposed by the owner of one business and three properties on the street.

4.18 During consultation a number of consultees expressed concern about the closure of Boyce's Street due to its use as an exit point for vehicles in Middle Street. Middle Street has a number of off-road car parks and on-street parking spaces,

most of whom will use Boyces Street to exit the area. The taxi trade also consider it an important route for taxis to exit the Old Town from Middle Street and to avoid the congestion of Kings Road and West Street.

- 4.19 Traffic counts carried out on Friday 25 May 2012 show that at peak times 38 vehicles an hour used Boyce's Street.
- 4.20 Boyce's Street currently suffers from a high level of crime and anti-social behaviour. The Police and the Council Licensing Team expressed concerns about the closure of Boyce's Street to traffic and would not support any licences for outdoor seating in the area.
- 4.21 There are 5 off-road parking spaces on Boyce's Street. Access for these would need to be retained. Access for deliveries to the businesses (particularly the 2 pubs and the tattoo parlour) would need to be retained.
- 4.22 Although outdoor seating will not be possible and some vehicle movements will still be necessary, reducing through traffic will provide significant safety benefits for the users of Middle Street School and allow the unsightly guard railing to be removed. It is therefore recommended that Boyce's Street is closed to through traffic with vehicular access restricted only to residents and businesses of Boyce's Street.
- 4.23 Prince Albert Street
The closure of Prince Albert Street between Ship Street and Black Lion Street was included as a proposal in Option B. It is recommended that this element should be progressed as it would create an area of vehicle-free road space with minimum implications for the wider Old Town area.
- 4.24 Taxis
Taxis will be permitted to pass the 'access only' restrictions and continue to be able to access the Old Town (except for East Street during its proposed hours of full closure).
- 4.25 Sussex Police have noted that at night *'the area at the southern end of East Street is heavily populated with licensed premises and there are ongoing issues with noise and taxis blocking the road.'* They have suggested that a taxi rank is installed on East Street immediately north of the junction with King's Road. In the view of the police this would *'allow customers of the bars and clubs to quickly be dropped off or picked up without blocking the road and minimising the amount of time people would potentially spend in the area adding to the noise levels. This would also help with current problems we have with over ranking at both the West Street and East Street taxi ranks.'*
- 4.26 Although it is accepted that there is a need to provide a taxi rank to help people leave the area at night, the potential for a new rank to create increased noise for local residents will need to be investigated. There may also be the scope for providing improved provision at existing nearby ranks, such as Pool Valley. It is therefore recommended that officers are requested to investigate ways to improve taxi provision at the southern end of East Street.
- 4.27 Parking

- 4.28 It is proposed that the existing quantity of residents bays and shared residents / pay & display bays are retained.
- 4.29 There are currently 405 on-street and off-street public parking spaces in the Old Town. Under the proposals public access by car to East Street will not be permitted between 11am and 7pm and it is therefore recommended that the 9 on-street Pay & Display parking spaces on East Street are removed. Access to Pay & Display spaces elsewhere in the Old Town and the 355 spaces in the Lanes Car Park will remain.
- 4.30 Loading
There are currently approximately 115 metres of loading bay space in the Old Town but loading also commonly occurs outside these bays on double yellow lines. It is proposed to increase the amount of loading bay space available to encourage loading to occur in suitable locations.
- 4.31 The narrow streets of the Old Town were not designed for, and are not suited to, large delivery vehicles. At busy times they force pedestrians to the sides of the road, create congestion and are visually obtrusive. A number of consultation respondents highlighted Heavy Goods Vehicles as a particular problem in the area. Therefore it is proposed that HGVs are permitted in the Old Town only before 11am.
- 4.32 It is recommended that the section of Ship Street between North Street and Duke Street will be available for loading before 11am each day. From 11am onwards a removable bollard will be raised at the Duke Street / Ship Street junction, creating a traffic-free space.
- 4.33 Cycling
Currently contraflow cycling is not permitted on many of the roads in the Old Town. It is recommended that officers are requested to investigate the feasibility of allowing contraflow cycling and to implement it where it is safe to do so.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Capital: A budget of £50,000 has been set aside to fund The Old Town project from within the Local Transport Plan capital allocation for 2012-13.

Revenue: There may be a loss of parking revenue associated with the removal of the 9 On Street Pay and Display spaces. It is not possible to predict whether the vehicles will be displaced elsewhere, or whether drivers will be discouraged from parking at all. There may be a migration to off street parking, where there is availability, or to other forms of transport. It is estimated that in the last financial year the income from these bays would have been around £18,000, at last year's tariffs.

Finance Officer Consulted: Name Karen Brookshaw Date: 06/09/12

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Before making Traffic Orders, the Council must consider all duly made, unwithdrawn objections. In limited circumstances it must hold public inquiries and may do so otherwise. It is usually possible for proposed orders to be modified, providing any amendments do not increase the effects of the advertised proposals. The Council also has powers to make orders in part and defer decisions on the remainder. Orders may not be made until the objection periods have expired and cannot be made more than 2 years after the notices first proposing them were first published. Orders may not come into force before the dates on which it is intended to publish notices stating that they have been made. After making orders, the steps which the Council must take include notifying objectors and putting in place the necessary traffic signs.

Relevant Human Rights Act rights to which the Council should have regard in exercising its traffic management powers are the right to respect for family and private life and the right to protection of property. These are qualified rights and therefore there can be interference with them in appropriate circumstances.

Lawyer Consulted:

Carl Hearsom

Date: 20/08/12

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Local disability groups have been consulted. The major points to emerge from consultation were concerns around cycling, seating, quality of paving and parking, and these will be taken into account during detailed design.
- 5.3.1 There are currently 11 disabled parking spaces in the Old Town and further 2 that were temporarily removed from Brills Lane when the southern end of East Street was closed. It is recommended that all 13 disabled parking spaces remain, although it will be necessary to relocate some of them.
- 5.3.2 The provision of dropped kerbs in the Old Town currently is poor. The Federation of Disabled, through its Get Involved Group, have worked with officers to produce a report listing locations within the Old Town that require accessibility improvements (see Appendix 4). It is recommended that, as part of this scheme, the most important of these improvements are installed and that the council makes a commitment to install all of them in the long term as budget allows.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4.1 The scheme will contribute towards the following Sustainable Community Strategy Priorities:
- A fair balance between the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, public transport users and motorists.
 - A healthier and higher-quality built environment

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 The police responded to consultation, a summary of which is contained within Appendix 2. The Old Town is within the Cumulative Impact Zone and the primary crime and disorder implication of these proposals will be on the night-time economy. The recommendations to install a taxi rank at the southern end of East Street and not to support tables and chairs licences on Boyce's Street have been made in part due to issues around the night-time economy.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 Several options, including a 'do nothing' option, were considered and consulted on. The recommended scheme is the scheme that has emerged following consultation and feasibility studies.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7.1 The Ship Street Doctor's Surgery is located within the Old Town. Staff and patients will be permitted to the 'access only' areas under these proposals.
- 5.7.2 The scheme forms part of the Walking Network programme. The programme is designed to improve pedestrian facilities along the most heavily-used pedestrian routes in the city, with the intention to increase walking levels and achieve the associated health benefits.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 The Old Town scheme will reduce traffic and improve the character of the area, contributing towards the council priorities of 'creating a more sustainable city'

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 Do nothing. The scheme was proposed as it was felt that over time the amount of traffic in the Old Town had risen to inappropriate levels and a change was required. A 'do nothing option' was put forward during consultation and received support from 32% of respondents.
- 6.2 Implement traffic reduction measures on East Street alone. This option was considered at the outset, however initial feasibility work showed that any changes made to East Street would have implications for traffic flow in the rest of the Old Town. Therefore a scheme looking at improvements to the whole area was considered appropriate,

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Old Town is the thriving heart of the city and one of the major destinations for tourists and locals. However the area is not appropriate for the high levels of traffic it currently experiences. These proposals seek to reduce levels of traffic by eliminating unnecessary journeys in the area whilst maintaining access for residents and businesses.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Consultation Material
2. Consultation Report
3. Proposed Scheme Plan
4. 'Disability Access in the Old Town' report

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

1. 'Pedestrian Network – Phase 2' report to Cabinet, 17 September 2009