

SWALE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD	Agenda Item:
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Meeting Date	Monday 11 th March 2013
Report Title	Review of the Faversham Pedestrianisation Scheme
Portfolio Holder	Cllr John Wright
SMT Lead	Brian Planner
Head of Service	Brian Planner
Lead Officer	Brett O'Connell
Classification	Open

Recommendations	That Members consider the consultation responses and recommend that Option 3 be progressed
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Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

1. This report provides a summary of the recent consultation for the 6 month review of the extension to the pedestrianisation scheme in Faversham Town Centre to include Fridays.

2 Background

- 2.1 Originally the central area of Faversham was pedestrianised only on Saturdays between 10am – 4pm and this closure to traffic had operated successfully for many years. On other days of the week traffic restrictions apply which limit access to disabled badge holders and deliveries. However, these restrictions are often ignored by drivers and following concerns raised at a Faversham Local Engagement Forum regarding possible conflict between vehicles and pedestrians it was agreed that the restrictions would be reviewed. A small working group consisting of local businesses, residents, disabled groups, Kent Highways, Borough Officers and Town, Borough, and County Councillors was formed to consider various options for the town centre and recommended that the possibility of an experimental Friday closure of the town centre be explored.
- 2.2 A consultation progressed with residents, businesses, visitors and statutory consultees in relation to the introduction of the extension of the pedestrianisation scheme to include Fridays. It was agreed that an experimental scheme commence on the 1st August 2012 and run for a trial period of nine months with a review after six months.
- 2.3 During this trial period a petition from town centre traders was received by this Transportation Board in December 2012 asking for the trial scheme to be abandoned. In considering the petition the Transportation Board decided to

continue with the trial as planned with a review and full consultation after six months of operation.

- 2.4 The six month review of the scheme has now been undertaken in the form of a consultation with residents, businesses, visitors and statutory consultees.

The consultation consisted of:

- Face to face consultation from a market stall on a Friday and Tuesday during January/February
- Press release in local paper
- Online consultation on the Swale Borough Council website
- Details on the FEP website
- A letter delivered personally to all surrounding business owners/managers with a face to face debate about the scheme where possible

- 2.5 A copy of the consultation forms posted to the businesses/residents is included in Annex A.

3 Consultation response

- 3.1 A summary of the key comments on the proposals are included within Annex B. A copy of the full responses to the consultation has been placed in the Members Room for reference.
- 3.2 A total of 246 responses were received at the date of writing this report 125 of people responding to the consultation supported the implementation and 121 objected. Of the objectors 46 were town centre traders, 11 of which are also Faversham residents, 69 were Faversham residents, 10 were visitors. Of the residents and visitors that objected, 25 stated they had concerns with access for blue badge holders.
- 3.3 It is estimated that there are approximately 120 commercial premises within the proposed pedestrianised area. A total of 87 businesses responded to the consultation and of these 46 objected to the proposals.
- 3.4 During the market stall consultation many traders stated verbally that the scheme was a good idea in the market area only, but Preston Street and East Street should not be part of the scheme allowing deliveries and blue badge holders to access that area during the restricted times. Traders also commented that if Preston Street were to be excluded from the scheme, the reversal of traffic flow in Preston Street would be a better option.
- 3.5 During the face to face consultation with businesses in the Preston Street and East Street areas the majority were opposed to the scheme because of the impact it had on access for deliveries, access for disabled customers and the impact on turnover. A large majority of these businesses also suggested the reversal of the one-way

system in Preston Street/East Street as a way of solving these problems but still allowing the Market Area to be pedestrianised.

- 3.6 The impact of the scheme on business turnover can be difficult to assess given the continued downturn in the economy and changes in shopping habits reflected in the recent closures of major retail chains. A number of retailers mentioned that the expansion of supermarket shopping in the town had made an impact on turnover. However, one retailer has stated that the number of customers reduced by 25% when the Sainsbury Supermarket opened and then a further 25% with the Friday closure to traffic.
- 3.7 A number of Blue Badge holders have expressed concerns with the Friday closure as they are unable to access close to shops and businesses. Those with mobility difficulties, but not necessarily wheelchair users, having the greatest concerns.
- 3.8 In response to the question regarding the hours of operation of the scheme there was no significant support for a possible change from 10.00am to 4.00pm to 10.00am to 3.00pm.

4 Scheme Options

- 4.1 There are a number of options that could be considered taking into account the various comments/suggestions received during the consultation stage on how the scheme could operate. Based on the key elements of the various comments the following possible options for the scheme are suggested.

Option 1

The experimental scheme to be removed and revert back to this area being closed to all vehicles on a Saturday only between 10am – 4pm.

Procedure

- a. The experimental Traffic Regulation Order to be revoked with immediate effect.

Option 2

For the current experimental scheme to become permanent in its current format with no alterations.

Procedure

- a. Signage at the entrance to Court Street to be altered to make the scheme restrictions clearer.
- b. Installation of further disabled persons parking bays near the entrance to Court Street pedestrianized area.

Option 3

To address the concerns of traders in East Street and Preston Street and allow disabled access to part of the town centre the one-way road layout could be changed. Access to this area would operate in the same way as normal days of the week with access restricted to deliveries and disabled badge holders only during the

restricted hours. The Market area could then be operated independently. All the roads in the town centre are would be closed to traffic on Saturdays as present.

The market area of Court Street would remain closed to vehicles on Fridays and Saturdays between 10am - 4pm. Traffic flow would be reversed in Preston Street (pedestrianized area) in a northerly direction exiting at traffic lights at East Street or the traffic flow would be reversed in East Street so entry can be gained from Newton Road/Crescent Road and exit at the southern end of Preston Street at the Stone Street junction.

Procedure

- a. As there was strong support to this suggestion from the majority of businesses in East Street and Preston Street further informal consultation is not considered necessary. To take this option forward it is suggested that a small working group is set up consisting of traders from the roads affected, Town and Borough Council representatives, Kent Highways and Borough Officers. The working group to develop and agree the best option for the flow of traffic.
- b. Formal consultation to progress in respect to the Traffic Regulation Order for the one way system.
- c. Liaise with Kent County Council in respect of changes to the road layout, detailed design and traffic signal phasing.
- d. Source funding to progress the traffic order, signing and physical changes to the road layout and traffic signal phasing.

The current experimental traffic order closing the town centre to traffic on Fridays can operate for further 9 months and it is considered that a suitable one-way option could be developed and implemented in that time span subject to funding.

5 Recommendation

- 5.1 The consultation appears to be an almost equal split between those supporting and those objecting to the scheme in its current form. However, changing the traffic flow in Preston Street/East Street would address the majority of the objectors concerns. Members are therefore recommended to agree to progress with option three as set out in the report.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Promoting a Healthy Environment through safer Highways
Financial, Resource and Property	Making of Traffic Regulation Order and funding of road layout changes if option 3 selected
Legal and Statutory	Traffic Regulation Order changes

Crime and Disorder	None at this stage
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The closure of the town centre to traffic reduces the risk of pedestrian/vehicle conflict and improves the safety of pedestrians
Equality and Diversity	The current scheme impacts on the ability of disabled badge holders to access the town centre during the restricted hours on Fridays. However, additional disabled parking bays have been provided in town centre car parks to compensate. In addition option 3 in the report would allow access to disabled badge holders to a large area of the town centre.
Sustainability	None at this stage

7 Appendices

- 7.1 Annex A – Consultation Form
- 7.2 Annex B – Consultees Key Comments
- 7.3 Annex C – Letter from Faversham Town Council

8 Background Papers

Full consultation responses in Member Room.

ANNEX B - Consultees Key Comments/Suggestions

Objectors Key Comments/Suggestions

Comment No.	Objectors Comment/Suggestion	No.
1	Close road 10am - 3pm for large vehicles but not blue badge holders	1
2	Require access to garage on Friday and Saturdays	2
3.	Allow vehicles to load/unload especially deliveries to businesses	27
4.	Allow traders access at all times	11
5.	Reverse the traffic flow in Preston Street	40
6.	Allow blue badge drivers access on restricted days	31
7.	Restrict the closure just to the market area	22
8.	Make the area a shared surface for vehicles and pedestrians with 10mph speed limit	1
9.	Scheme to run summer months only	3
10.	Expand market area to include Preston Street	3
11.	Revert back to Saturday closure only	2
12.	Open the road on Fridays	4

13.	Shorter closure time	1
14.	Use swipe card or inspector at barrier to let in blue badge holders and trade deliveries	4
15.	Enforce the old restrictions properly	4
16.	Scheme confusing being enforced on different days	2
17.	Open the roads Friday and Saturdays	1
18.	Off street parking needs increasing	2
19.	Object to not having vehicular access to my property at all times	1
20.	10mph speed limit on market days	1

Supporters Key Comments/Suggestions

Comment No.	Supporters Comment/Suggestion	No.
1	Road must stay closed for pedestrian safety	1
2	Brilliant scheme	1
3.	Reverse traffic flow in East Street	2
4.	Much safer when shopping with children	3
5.	Slight increase in footfall since scheme started	2
6.	Would like to see the scheme extended to a Tuesday	1
7.	Deliveries are a problem	4
8.	Reverse the traffic flow in Preston Street	3
9.	Some inconveniences for blue badge holders	1
10.	No negative impact on business	5
11.	Reduced restrictions 10am – 3pm would help the elderly	2
12.	Safer for pedestrians	7
13.	Should be closed all the time	1
14.	Need more disabled persons parking in town	1
15.	Shops and blue badge holders need access	2

16.	Town is better now	1
17.	Better enforcement needed	2
18.	Extend the scheme to cover all market days	2
19.	Increased space for mobility scooters	1
20.	Extend the scheme to include all the week	1
21.	Problems with cyclists riding through at restricted times	1
22.	Scheme not working as vehicles park on the footway	2
23.	Central Faversham to be entirely pedestrianized during the day	1

ANNEX C



Alexander Centre, Preston Street, Faversham, Kent ME13 8NY Telephone: Faversham 594442/3
e-mail: Faversham.TownCouncil@virgin.net

Your Ref.

Our Ref. JW

Date: 19 February 2013

Brian Planner
Head of Service Delivery
Swale Borough Council
Swale House
East Street
Sittingbourne
Kent ME10 3HT.

Dear Brian

Experimental Extension to the Pedestrianisation Scheme: Faversham

I am writing on behalf of Faversham Town Council regarding the experimental extension to the pedestrianisation scheme, implemented in August 2012, to include Fridays between 10am – 4pm for a period of nine months, with a review after six months. The six months came to an end on Friday, 8 February, 2013. This letter confirms in writing, in advance of the SBC/KCC Joint Transportation Board meeting on 11 March, the Town Council's support for the continuation of the scheme.

At a meeting of the Town Council on Monday, 11 February, Members considered the scheme in detail. They acknowledged there had been opposition to the scheme by a number of retailers, and had received a petition to that effect. However, it was their considered opinion that the majority of views expressed to them were in favour. They agreed the concerns about reductions in takings were genuine and considerable, but felt this could not necessarily be put down to the pedestrianisation scheme, particularly when decline in trading on the high street was a national issue, recognised by the Government in its support for the Portas Review and subsequent Town Team pilots. Members felt the extension of the scheme had, overall, been beneficial both to traders and pedestrians.

The Town Council voted in favour to support the continuation of the scheme, while at the same time asking for reassurance that all papers, including petitions for and against the scheme, would be in front of the Joint Transportation Board on 11 March so that a decision could be made in the light of all the available evidence. I would be grateful if you could confirm that that will be the case.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Westlake OBE
Town Clerk

