

TO: SWALE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD
DATE: 18th September 2006
SUBJECT: SITTINGBOURNE HIGH STREET – PEDESTRIAN SAFETY
BY: Divisional Manager – Kent Highway Services Mid Kent Division
Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: Update on progress with Sittingbourne High Street and pedestrian safety Issues.
Decision Required: That Members' endorse the actions outlined.

Introduction

1. At the meeting of this Board on 26 June 2006 Members recommended that a further site meeting with relevant stakeholders be held to agree a way forward on mobility issues within the High Street.

Discussion

2. A meeting between representatives of the Access Group the County Member and officers of Kent Highway Services (KHS) and Swale Borough Council (SBC) was held on 28 July 2006. The meeting involved walking the length of the High Street to enable the Access Group to highlight their issues of concern. The issues identified were;
 - a. The need to make street furniture more visible.
 - b. Position of certain items of street furniture, i.e. benches, bins, etc.
 - c. Tactile paving at traffic calming platforms.
 - d. Action against traders who obstruct the pavement.
 - e. Review of signing and designating the High Street as a Pedestrian Priority site.
 - f. A pelican crossing to create a safer point for the blind and partially sighted to cross.
 - g. Parking on pavements.
3. The following were agreed in respect of the above.
 - a. KHS have undertaken to paint a more visible band on street light columns and bollards and SBC will carryout similar work on their street furniture within the High Street..
 - b. SBC have undertaken to review the position of the benches and bins and will relocate them, where possible, to improve access.
 - c. KHS will introduce tactile paving at traffic calming platforms as means of identification of informal crossing points. The Access Groups view was that tactile paving should be laid on either pavement along the entire length of the platforms. The advice given to KHS is *"A great deal of work has been done to ensure the safety of pedestrians by making areas of High Street ambiguous, so that drivers are cautious and slow down. This will help all disabled pedestrians. Where the carriageway has been raised to meet the level of the footway, pedestrians appeared happy to walk across the road. In order for blind and partially sighted people to*

cross the road safely, there should usually be one row of buff (or contrasting colour other than red) tactile paving laid where the carriageway has been raised to height of the footway. However, in this case it would lead to vast quantities of tactile paving being laid along the High Street. It may therefore be advisable to lay small areas of tactile paving at each raised part where the carriageway is raised to the footway height, either side of the carriageway. This should be done in conjunction with a visually impairment group such as Kent Association for the Blind". This is the approach KHS intends to adopt and will include the Access Group in the process.

- d. KHS will take firm action against traders who display goods and signs on the pavement that impede movement. Infringements can be reported to KCC's Contact Centre on 08458 – 247 800.

Items a – d above will be implemented during this financial year.

- e. Under the current guidelines it is not possible to designate a street as a pedestrian priority site. However, discussions with the Department for Transport appear to suggest that it may be possible to achieve this. However, any departure from the current guideline would have to be specifically approved by the Department. This is being pursued and progress resulting from these discussions will be the subject of updates to future meetings of this Board.
- f. Sittingbourne High Street until mid 1990s was a two way carriageway with narrow pavements either side. Following extensive consultation with the stakeholders the Borough Council introduced an Environmental Improvement Scheme which involved; narrowing the road to a single carriageway with one way traffic from west to east, wider pavements to improve safety for pedestrians, traffic calming features with tabletops to reduce traffic speed and enable the less able to cross the road with relative ease, materials and street furniture sympathetic to the local architecture. Further work was undertaken by Kent Highway Services to designate the High Street as a 20 mph Zone.

The combination of these measures have reduced traffic speeds to below 20 mph, reduced traffic flow and personal injury crashes significantly and created a more pleasant environment for the local community, shoppers and visitors to enjoy.

There are a number of sites within Kent that suffer from high level of personal injury crashes and it is important that these receive higher priority and the valuable resources are invested on sites where the needs are greatest. To introduce a Controlled Crossing (Pelican Crossing, etc) in Sittingbourne High Street would have to be at the expense of one of these sites and this would be very difficult to justify. It is therefore proposed that no further action is taken regarding introducing a pelican crossing in the High Street.

- g. The Borough Council in conjunction with the local police will continue to put notices on vehicles that park on the footway. In addition, the Borough Council will also investigate options for a traffic order that will allow penalty noticed to be issued to offending vehicles. However, the traffic order to facilitate this is likely to require specific authorisation from the Department for Transport. The Highway Authority would need to apply for this authorisation, so Swale Borough Council will work closely with Kent Highway Services to develop options and the application.

Decision Required

That Members' note the report and recommend that:

- (1) The items referred to in 3 a-d above are implemented this financial year.
- (2) No further action is taken in respect of introducing a controlled crossing within the High Street.

- (3) To review the existing signage and investigate the possibility of designating the High Street as a pedestrian priority site and to explore options for parking enforcement.

Contact Officers:

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Background Documents:

Sittingbourne High Street - Swale Joint Transportation Board Report - 27th March 2006