

T0: SWALE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD COMMITTEE

FROM: MINSTER-ON-SEA PARISH COUNCIL

RE: LACK OF SIGNAGE FOR MINSTER ON THE NEW A249 IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Minster-on-Sea Parish Council (MPC) has met with Kent Highway Services (KHS) on 20th April 2007 & 18th May 2007 respectively to address the lack of signage for Minster on the new A249 Improvement Scheme and the implications for visitors to the eastern end of the island. MPC disagreed with the decision made by KHS that the primary route to Minster is via the A250 and B2008. MPC's view is that it will increase the burden on an already congested area being Halfway. MPC asked that "Minster" be signed via both of the Cowstead roundabouts. *It was noted that Minster is already signed at the Cowstead / Lower Road roundabout but not at the other.*

CONSIDERATIONS RAISED BY MPC:-

- **PARISH BOUNDARIES** – KHS were confused about where the parish boundaries for Minster, Halfway and Eastchurch were. These were clarified including a reminder to KHS that Minster is the first destination on the B2231 Lower Road and not Eastchurch as they had stated.
- **POPULATION** –Minster has clearly a major population with 15,000 residents. This includes Thistle Hill which is one of the fastest growing housing developments in Kent. Thistle Hill is located on the south side of Minster but signage will direct visitors via the A250 adding more mileage to their journey.
- **BOTTLENECK** – Halfway is already suffering as a direct result of congestion with four schools located in the immediate area. MPC asked why KHS are routing traffic into a bottleneck situation.
- **POSTAL ADDRESSES** – "Minster" is listed with a Sheerness, Kent postcode. Visitors to the island will take the route via Sheerness rather than the shorter route along the B2231 Lower Road.
- **EMERGENCY VEHICLES** – Drivers of emergency vehicles unfamiliar with the island could lose precious time in reaching their destinations which present as a serious risk to the Public.
- **PRISONS** - There are three prisons on the eastern end of the island housing approximately 2,500 prisoners. Should there be any incident of concern; emergency services might face uncertain delay by taking the longest route. *MPC also queries the following planning applications which include Elmley and Swaleside Prisons, the Thistle*

Hill Housing Development, Norwood Landfill Site and the Kingsborough Housing Developments; all of whom are listed as having the B2231 Lower Road as their primary access.

- **TOURISM / CARAVANS** – Both Minster and the eastern end of the island are popular destination for tourists and there are numerous caravan sites in these areas. Access for these vehicles can only be gained via the B2231 Lower Road route. They cannot get through any other way.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION INCLUDED:-

- Traffic Flow Data (2004)
- 3 Year Personal Injury Crash Records shared (Up to 2006)
- Current photographic evidence regarding the existing situation regarding signage.
- Route from A249 and subsequent split in road traffic noted.
- Video highlighting the differences between a journey to Minster via the B2231 Lower Road and a journey via the A250 / Halfway. Time, distance and congestion are evident factors which support MPC's argument to use the B2231 Lower Road rather than the A250. This video shows the lack of signage for "Minster" and the effects this lack of information could have for those unfamiliar with the island.

DECISIONS

1. As a direct result of these discussions, KHS agreed that MPC has proven beyond doubt that the argument which indicates the need for signing "Minster" stands as there is nothing off the A249 that indicates "Minster". KHS agreed with MPC's view that the A250 is not the most appropriate route to Minster and that the B2231 Lower Road was the more favourable one in view of the congestion factor. KHS will look at positively signing "Minster" so that it makes sense in relation to junctions. A site meeting to be arranged to progress this.
2. **ROAD LAY-OUT** - Concerns were noted regarding the road lay-out particularly regarding the concerns about the double lane routes. KHS agreed to review this perhaps by painting arrows on the road as indicators.
3. **ROUTE ASSESSMENT STUDY** – As there have been 16 Personal Injury Crashed in the A249 / A250 area including a high proportion at traffic lights and road junctions, KHS agreed to progress with a Route Assessment Study in response to MPC's concerns regarding intersection and safety concerns.

UPDATE ON PROGRESS

To date, there has been no further progress and Minster remains "unsigned". Minster-on-Sea Parish Council is very concerned about the negative effect this lack of inclusion of signage for Minster has on those unfamiliar with the island as it severely impacts on emergency services, local business and tourism to name just a few and presents serious risks for the residents of Minster.