

TO: SWALE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD
DATE: Monday 13th June 2011
SUBJECT: Faversham town centre traffic management proposals
BY: Faversham Joint Public Realm Working Group/Jacobs Engineering UK Ltd

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: Design and consultation has been carried out on a proposed new one-way system in Faversham town centre. A significant number of residents and businesses are not in favour of reversing the traffic flow on Preston Street.

Decision Required: Support the decision to stop work on this project following the negative results of the consultation.

Introduction

Traffic management in Faversham town centre has been the subject of intermittent discussion and consultation for a number of years with a range of options put forward. After a further round of discussion and consultation in 2010 it was agreed at the Swale Joint Transportation Board (JTB) on 6th September 2010, that the current traffic flow in Preston Street should be reversed.

A traffic impact assessment had been carried out in Faversham Town Centre in late January/early February 2010 which indicated that reversal of the Preston Street traffic flow was a viable option to pursue.

Following this JTB decision a design showing proposed changes to the current traffic flow was drawn up (please see Appendix A) and public consultation was carried out, in order to gain feedback regarding the proposed changes.

The public consultation consisted of a letter drop to over 900 properties/businesses in Faversham town centre outlining the proposals and asking consultees to complete a questionnaire in order to provide their views on the proposals (the extent of the letter drop is shown Appendix B). Letters were also sent to statutory consultees (a list of which is contained in Appendix C), and a 2 day exhibition was held on 1st and 2nd April 2011 at the Alexander Centre which was advertised in the Faversham News, and at which a number of attendees completed a questionnaire to express their views of the proposals.

The results of this consultation identified a range of issues associated within the proposals that need to be considered and addressed, before the proposals can be progressed.

Swale JTB also agreed at its September 2010 meeting that Faversham town centre should be closed to traffic on market days. While the proposed changes to the one-way system in Preston Street do not directly address that matter, the Faversham public realm group has taken care not to bring forward a proposal that would adversely affect that agreement.

Discussion

Between 25th February and 22nd April 2011 a series of consultation exercises were carried out to consult with statutory authorities and gauge public opinion on the proposed changes

to the traffic flow within Faversham town centre. Table One below provides a timetable of the consultation that was carried out.

Table One: Consultation

Date	Consulted	Form of consultation
25 th February 2011	Kent Police Roads Policing Section	Email with a questionnaire and plan attached asking for comments regarding the proposals.
18 th March to 15 th April 2011	Residents and businesses	Letter drop including a questionnaire and plan explaining the proposals and asking for comments (extent of letter drop shown in Appendix B).
24 th March to 22 nd April 2011	Statutory consultees (list of which provided in Appendix C)	Letter including a questionnaire and plan explaining the proposals and asking for comments.
1 st /2 nd April 2011	General public including businesses and other organisations (e.g Faversham Town Council)	A two day exhibition at the Alexander Centre, exhibiting proposals and asking attendees to complete a questionnaire in order to allow them to give their opinions on the proposals.

The consultation resulted in a number of comments being received regarding the proposals and allowed consultees to state whether or not they supported the proposals. 127 responses to the consultation were received, a return rate of approximately 14%, and the results of the consultation are shown below which suggest that overall the majority of those who replied were not in favour of the proposal: around 86% of those who were consulted did not reply.

Residents

In favour of the scheme – **17.4%**
 Not in favour of the scheme – **68.5%**
 Not sure – **14.1%**

Businesses

In favour of the scheme – **37.1%**
 Not in favour of the scheme – **54.3%**
 Not sure – **8.6%**

A petition against the proposals containing 550 signatures was also received. The signatures were collected from customers of the “Faversham Kebab House” in Preston Street, no reasons why signatories were against the scheme were provided. However, the owner of the “Faversham Kebab House” informed a public realm group member that his main objection to the scheme was having a taxi rank outside his premises and this proposal can be removed from the design of the scheme.

It seems that a number of business owners had misunderstood the scheme believing the main traffic flow would be from Station Road to Market Street, not from Station Road to

Stone Street. The plans of the proposals were also reproduced incorrectly in editorial reports by the Faversham News which could have influenced the results of the consultation.

Not all of the comments/concerns that were raised were negative with some comments offering support for the scheme stating that they felt that the proposal was a good idea and that it would improve traffic flow, make it better for pedestrians and will stop rat-running.

Although not all of the comments/concerns that were raised during the consultation can be presented here (there were some 45 different types of comments received), the most common concerns are as follows;

Increase in traffic on other roads

Residents and business owners raised concerns that the proposal would increase traffic on other roads in the vicinity of the town centre because traffic would no longer be able to travel south along Preston Street. The most significant concerns were that traffic would increase on Roman Road and Briton Road which are residential roads with parking on both sides, making travelling along them more difficult.

Right turn from Preston Street into East Street

A large number of respondents to the consultation were concerned about the right turn that would need to be carried out by HGVs at the Preston Street/East Street junction. The scheme design has been assessed and all traffic can make the right turn. However, articulated lorries will need to mount the pavement on the northern side of the junction to complete the turn.

While the public consultation did not reveal any Preston Street businesses that use artic lorries for loading or unloading from the street, and any new scheme could prohibit their access to it, the safety implications of this issue are a key concern.

Loss of trade

Concerns were raised by a significant number of residents and businesses that trade would be lost by businesses in Preston Street between Stone Street and Station Road and that these businesses would be significantly damaged by the proposed changes to the one way system. Businesses stressed that the proposal would result in jobs being lost and would force some of them to close down, because it would reduce access, increase business journey times, reduce passing trade and make deliveries and loading/unloading more difficult.

However, several businesses expressed the opposite opinion, believing the proposals would increase traffic volumes in Preston Street because drivers would find the new system easier to negotiate than the existing one, and this would increase passing trade.

Increase in vehicle speeds

Concerns were raised by residents and businesses that vehicle speeds will increase in Preston Street as a result of the one-way system.

Kerb build outs

The proposal includes the introduction of a number of kerb build outs at the Preston Street/Market Street, Stone Street/Preston Street and Preston Street/Station Road junctions as well as at designated points along Preston Street (between the junctions with Stone Street and Station Road). During the consultation a number of comments were made by respondents stating that they felt the build outs were a nuisance. Swale Borough Council's

Design and Conservation Manager also felt that the number of kerb build outs within the proposals was excessive.

Impact on Faversham Carnival

Concerns were raised by a number of respondents during the consultation that the proposed kerb build out at the Preston Street/Market Street junction would prevent vehicles turning left from Preston Street into Market Street. Although this manoeuvre is not carried out on a day to day basis due to the current one-way system that is in place it is a manoeuvre that is carried out once a year by the Faversham Carnival procession. Therefore the construction of a kerb build out will impact on the running of this event.

Pedestrian guardrail – Stone Street/Dorset Place

A number of residents of Dorset Place raised concerns during the consultation that the proposed pedestrian guardrail at the entrance to Dorset Place would prevent vehicle access.

Decision Required

The consultation carried out on the proposed new one-way system has identified a range of issues associated with the proposals.

The most common concerns raised have been presented above. However, issues such as some increased business distances travelled as a result of the proposed new one-way system and an, as yet unquantified, increase in traffic on other roads will not be resolved through changes to the design of the one-way system.

Owing to the majority of respondents objecting during the consultation period, it is proposed that this scheme is not progressed any further.

Contact Officers: Anne-Marie Hannam (Jacobs)/Steve Huckle (KHS)

Background documents: None