

<b>SWALE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD</b>	<b>Agenda Item:</b>
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<b>Meeting Date</b>	Monday 18 <sup>th</sup> June 2012
<b>Report Title</b>	Extension to the Faversham Pedestrianisation Scheme
<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	Cllr John Wright
<b>SMT Lead</b>	Brian Planner
<b>Head of Service</b>	Brian Planner
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Brett O'Connell
<b>Classification</b>	Open

<b>Recommendations</b>	Members are asked to consider the objection/comments made by the consultees and recommend that a pedestrianisation scheme is introduced on Fridays for a trial period of nine months with a review after six months of operation.
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## **Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the recent consultation for the possible extension of a full pedestrianisation scheme for Faversham Town Centre to include Fridays.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 The central area of Faversham is currently pedestrianised on Saturdays between 10am – 4pm and this closure to traffic has operated successfully for many years. On other days of the week a Traffic Order operates that restricts access to the town centre to deliveries and disabled badge holders. However, this restriction is widely ignored and can only be enforced by the police who have limited resources to undertake such enforcement.
- 2.2 The possibility of the town centre being fully pedestrianised on other days of the week has been investigated on a number of occasions, the most recent in 2010 on the traffic flow reversal in Preston Street, but with no agreement to go ahead. Concerns were again raised regarding the level of vehicular traffic in the town centre and the potential conflict with pedestrians at the Faversham Local Engagement Forum meeting held in November 2011. The Forum requested that the pedestrianisation of central Faversham on Market days be reconsidered.
- 2.3 A small working group was established consisting of representatives from local businesses, residents, disabled groups, Kent Highways, Borough Officers and Town, Borough, and County Councillors. The group considered various options for

the town centre and recommended that the possibility of an experimental Friday closure of the town centre be explored.

- 2.4 A consultation has been undertaken with residents, businesses, visitors and statutory consultees in relation to the introduction of the extension of the pedestrianisation scheme to include Fridays. The proposal is for the scheme to commence on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2012 and run for a trial period of nine months with a review after six months. The review will be in the form of a further consultation to assess the impact of the scheme and decide if any changes should be made.

Consultation has included:

- A letter to the surrounding businesses
- A letter to Ward Members and statutory bodies
- Press release in the local paper
- Online consultation on the Swale Borough Council website
- Details on the FEP website
- Face to face consultation from a market stall on three Fridays during April/May

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

### **3 Consultation response**

- 3.1 Comments on the proposals are included within Annex B.
- 3.2 A total of 154 responses were received at the date of writing this report 80.5% of people responding to the consultation supported the implementation and 19.5% objected. Of the objectors 46.7% were town centre traders and 53.3% were Faversham residents or visitors.
- 3.3 It is estimated that there are approximately 120 commercial premises within the proposed pedestrianised area. A total of 19 businesses responded to the consultation and of these 14 (12%) objected to the proposals.
- 3.4 Looking through the comments it is clear that most of the town centre traders who objected were concerned that they would be unable to receive deliveries on a Friday or make deliveries to customers if the scheme were to be extended. During the market stall consultation various business owners commented that they thought it would be hard to change delivery days as the couriers were not flexible and felt their business would suffer through stock not being delivered. It was also noted that some businesses stated their delivery service to customers would be affected as they would not be able to load their vehicles outside their premises and this will cause problems with heavy/bulky goods that they cannot transport to a nearby car park to load their vehicles.
- 3.5 The majority of Faversham residents who objected were concerned that blue badge holders would not have access to the market and shops as currently. To assist with

disabled parking it is proposed as part of the scheme to install a further 5 disabled parking bays in Central car park and 3 new bays in the Partridge Lane car park. There may also be a possibility of installing disabled bays in Court Street depending on funding being available to lower the kerb to aid safe access for blue badge holders. A plan showing the proposed location of new disabled bays is included in Annex C.

- 3.6 The views of disabled people have been represented by Brenda Chester on the working group and she has raised a number of key issues in a letter attached as Annex D. In addition to a request for more disabled parking spaces as set out in the report a suggestion is made that the scheme should allow access for disabled drivers/taxis from 3.00pm and that this should also apply on Saturdays. It would be difficult to achieve compliance with just allowing access to this group of drivers without others, including deliveries, also seeking access. However, Members may wish to consider a scheme that operated only up to 3.00pm which would cover the busiest part of the day as referred to by a trader in 3.8 below. It is also requested that disabled drivers be allowed to stay within the town centre up to 11.00am. The legality of this when a restriction applied from 10.00am would need to be explored with Kent Highways.
- 3.7 Some residents were also concerned the extension of the scheme could reduce income for businesses and therefore affect the local economy with smaller businesses losing income and closing down.
- 3.8 During the market stall consultation one business owner asked whether the proposed scheme times could be reduced to include just the core times of pedestrian footfall from 10am – 2pm on the basis that this would allow pedestrian friendly shopping during the busiest period but also give more flexibility for businesses waiting for deliveries or indeed delivering themselves to the customers premises.

## **4 Alternative Options**

- 4.1 Alternative options would be to make no changes to the current vehicle access arrangements to the town centre or to reconsider the traffic flow reversal in Preston Street allowing more flexibility for closure options in Court Street.
- 4.2 However, there is obviously a clear majority view from the consultation that the scheme should be implemented although concerns have been raised by town centre traders regarding servicing to properties where there is no rear servicing and by disabled badge holders.
- 4.3 The major concern received from traders related to access for deliveries. Whilst it is noted that a number of retail businesses do not have rear access it would still be possible to take deliveries before 10am or after 4pm as operates in many other small towns with full pedestrianisation. Deliveries will continue to be possible throughout the day on Monday to Thursday. It would also be possible to arrange for smaller deliveries to be barrowed from the closest car park/rear service area which again is a system operated in other towns. The benefits of an experimental (trial)

scheme is that the impact of the proposals can be closely monitored and will be reviewed as part of the future consultation.

- 4.4 Consideration could be given to a shorter closure period as discussed in the report. However, to avoid confusion it is recommended that any closure that is implemented on a Friday should be consistent with the Saturday closure. The effect of this could be reviewed as part of the monitoring and further review of the scheme during the trial period.
- 4.5 In terms of disabled parking it is considered that the additional parking bays in car parks close to the town centre will help address the needs of those with mobility problems. In addition it may be possible to provide further disabled parking bays in Court Street. A benefit of a fully pedestrianised scheme is that the blind and partially sighted will be able to access the town centre in a much safer environment.
- 4.6 There are a very small number of residents with off-road parking that is accessed from within the pedestrianised area. It is proposed that access will be maintained for these residents.

## 5 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Improving Community Safety through safer Highways.
Financial, Resource and Property	None identified at this stage although there will be costs incurred to advertise the road traffic order, change the signing at the entrance to the pedestrian area and install drop kerbs in Court Street if additional disabled bays are provided in this area.
Legal and Statutory	Traffic Regulation Orders to be made.
Crime and Disorder	None at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The proposals will reduce the risk of pedestrian/vehicle conflict and improve the safety of pedestrians in the town centre.
Equality and Diversity	The proposals will impact on the ability of disabled badge holders to access the town centre during the restricted hours on Fridays. However, additional disabled parking is proposed as close as possible to the town centre which will also be an improved provision throughout the week. The proposal will be of benefit to the blind and partially sighted.
Sustainability	None identified at this stage.

## **6 Appendices**

6.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report

- Annex A – Copy of consultation material
- Annex B – Copy of the consultation comments
- Annex C – Copy of the proposed new disabled bay locations
- Annex D – Copy of a letter from Brenda Chester

## **7 Background Papers**

7.1 None.