

TOWN COUNCIL

ENCL: 3191

28 MARCH 2017

TOWN CENTRE TRAFFIC, INCLUDING SOUTH STREET CONSULTATION  
PROPOSALS

REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK

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## **1.0 PURPOSE**

This report, which has been referred from the Highways Working Group, is submitted to enable members to consider the proposed consultation on town centre traffic and specifically South Street. This is also the subject of the Council Open Public Forum at this meeting.

### **Background**

In Summer 2001, the Town Council undertook an extensive public consultation exercise on the “possible closure of South Street for a trial period.” Over 60% of the residents who responded, supported the selective closure of South Street on market days. A number of traders, mostly from South Street, opposed the closure. The proposal was not taken forward at the time.

The issue has formally been raised subsequently at the Town Council in 2004 and then again during 2008-2009, when the Council considered a number of recommendations for the town centre, including changes to crossings and loading bays. These were subsequently agreed for implementation by Dorset County Council, the Highway Authority. There was consultation undertaken at that time on town centre traffic with local organisations. Comments from the public were again invited. The possible closure of South Street was raised by some respondents to that consultation. The Town Council said at the time that it would re-visit this issue.

The Town Council included a proposal to consult on the options for South Street as a priority project, in its current Town Plan.

South Street is closed on occasions for special events. In 2017, the road will be closed for a specified period of time for the Remembrance Parade, Hat Festival and the Carnival/Torchlight processions.

## **Objectives**

In 2016, the Town Council agreed a brief to Dorset County Council for feasibility work on town centre traffic, including South Street. The brief included the following objectives, that the Town Council wished to see in any scheme proposals:

- improve through traffic flows,
- provide a higher quality environment,
- protect and enhance the historic fabric of the town,
- reduce traffic speeds,
- support the economic prosperity of the town,
- improve air quality,
- improve access for pedestrians, cyclists, the elderly and disabled,
- maintain vehicular access for emergency services and public transport (including taxis),
- provide accessible parking for shoppers, residents and other essential users,
- provide more car parking.

The County Council was asked to look at 5 options for South Street:

1. One Way Northbound
2. One Way Southbound
3. Full Closure
4. Shared Space
5. Occasional Closure

The County Council was also asked to look at the feasibility of introducing a town centre speed limit of 20 mph.

The County Council has reported back to the Town Council with its draft findings, which have been discussed with councillors at the Highways Working Group.

## **Feasibility Findings**

The County Council undertook a traffic flow survey at the Town Hall Junction for a period of 12 hours on a Thursday in September 2016. When compared to a similar survey in 2003, the indications were that the overall traffic flows have remained the same or slightly reduced.

A simplistic computer traffic model has also been prepared by the County Council, based on traffic turning counts at the various road junctions in and around Bridport, giving information on morning peak hour flows. The County Council state that this “simplistic model” indicates that if traffic were prevented from entering South Street, from East and West Streets, there would be a substantial increase in traffic flow on Sea Road South, as traffic diverts to access South Street, via the Crown Roundabout. Traffic on other roads would change to

a much lesser extent, as increase in flow in one direction, would largely be cancelled out by a reduction in flow in the other direction.

If traffic were prevented from entering East and West Streets from South Street, the model indicates that there would be only fairly small changes in two-way flows, other than in Gundry Lane, St Michael's Lane and Tannery Road, where traffic would increase very substantially. This would result not only from traffic being prevented from turning into West Street from South Street, but also from traffic using Gundry Lane to access West Street and then turn eastward.

If South Street were to be closed to all vehicular traffic at its northern end, it shows that traffic would again be likely to increase substantially on both Sea Road South and the Gundry Lane route.

However, the County Council accept that the model has been prepared adopting a simplistic approach and has also not taken account of potential future development, such as Vearse Farm on the west side of the town.

### **South Street Options**

The County Council looked at each of the options for South Street and identified potential positive and negative outcomes for each. These are summarised in the Appendix 2 to this report.

### **Comments**

The Town Council has discussed the draft feasibility findings with Dorset County Council.

The traffic modelling so far undertaken is, as stated by the County Council, a simple model. There is no significant evidence-based analysis of traffic movements for any of the options. The impact on traffic flows of the occasional closures for events has not been monitored. The County Council state that to accurately forecast traffic flows, it would require a detailed and expensive traffic model.

### **Next Steps**

The Town Council's Highways Working Group noted that the County Council accept that the traffic modelling so far undertaken cannot accurately predict the impact on traffic of any of the options. The reported costs of undertaking detailed traffic modelling are also prohibitive. It therefore feels that to accurately assess the impact of the closure of South Street, a temporary trial closure for up to 3 months should be considered.

The main focus of the proposed consultation will therefore be to seek views on a trial temporary closure. The results would enable the Town Council to assess the strength of feeling and support, before any further work is undertaken.

Consultation would be by questionnaire which would be online, available in the Tourist Information Centre, Library and Mountfield, with wide advertising. There would also be separate dedicated consultation with local organisations, including the emergency services, Chamber of Trade, bus operators, taxis, Tourism Association and other local organisations through BLAP. There would also be further discussion with Highways England (regarding the impact on the A35) and Dorset County Council.

### **Decision Making and Costs**

Dorset County Council, as the Highway Authority, has to agree any traffic changes and it would have to decide if it would support a trial closure. It will also be necessary to identify funding for the traffic orders and work required, if it is agreed to pursue a temporary trial closure.

The costs of a temporary trial closure (including order making) could be between £20,000-£50,000. It is likely that these costs would have to be met by the Town Council.

### **Timescale**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Timing</b>
Consultation	Town Council	April - June 2017
Consider responses/way forward to include comments of County Council and Highways England	Town and County Council	July - Aug 2017
<b>If support for trial closure:</b>		
Draft Proposals	Town and County Council	Sept - Oct 2017
Order Marking Process, including statutory consultation	County Council	Oct - Jan 2017/18
Experimental Trial Closure	Town and County Council	Mar - May 2018 (12 weeks)

### **Other Issues**

As part of its objective to reduce the speed of traffic through the town, the Town Council would also like to seek views on whether a 20 mph limit should be requested, covering the town centre area. At this stage views are sought on the area of a possible speed restriction and if supported, then the individual roads would be confirmed. Any proposals would again require County Council support, funding and necessary order making.

### **Recommendation**

The Town Council is asked to agree to undertake a consultation exercise as in Appendix 1 and receive a report back on the outcome in July 2017.

22 March 2017

Bob Gillis  
Town Clerk

## Appendix 1- Proposed Consultation Questions

1. **What issues do you consider to be most important in relation to the town centre and traffic:**

Improving movement of traffic through the town (traffic flows)	
Improving the quality of the environment	
Reducing traffic speeds	
Improving air quality	
Better access for pedestrians and cyclists.	
More car parking	
Improved public transport	

Please rate in order of importance – 1 being most important – 7, least important. Include any other issues you consider to be a priority under question 3 below.

2. **Do you support the closure of South Street for a trial period of up to 3 months, to assess its impact on the town centre?**

(The closure would be from the junction of Gundry Lane to the Town Hall junction. There would be access for delivery, emergency and disabled vehicles).

Yes

No

Don't Know

3. **Do you have any comments regarding South Street, or any other aspect of town centre traffic?**

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4. **Would you support a speed limit of 20 mph on all town centre roads included within the blue shaded area below?**



**About you**

Do you live in the Bridport area?                    yes/no

If yes, please include post code: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a Visitor to the area?                    yes/no

If yes, please say where from: \_\_\_\_\_

In Bridport, are you a:

- Pedestrian    yes/no
- Public Transport user                            yes/no
- Car User    yes/no
- Cyclist    yes/no

Are you a shop owner in Bridport?            yes/no

## Appendix 2 - Dorset County Council Comments on each option

	Option 1 - One-way Northbound	Option 2 - One-way Southbound	Option 3 - Full Closure	Option 4 – Shared Space	Option 5 - Occasional Closure
<b>Positive</b>				<p>This is the sharing of road space by vehicles and pedestrians.</p> <p>The County Council view is that it is most unlikely that a shared space area would operate satisfactorily, with the traffic likely to continue using the road</p>	<p>The impact of temporary closures for events has not been monitored.</p> <p>The County Council consider that this would not achieve the project objectives, as there would be no change to the existing traffic management arrangements for the majority of the time.</p>
Improvement to the environment in and around Bucky-Doo Square.	✓	✓	✓✓		
Decrease/remove traffic at northern end of South Street, beneficial to historic buildings.	✓	✓	✓✓		
Air quality improved top of South Street.	✓	✓	✓✓		
If road converted to pedestrian use, significant benefit for pedestrians, including the elderly and disabled.	✓	✓	✓✓		
Emergency services, taxis and public transport access maintained. Possible re-route bus service which currently runs southward along South Street.	✓	✓	✓		
Provide additional parking, if wanted	✓	✓	✓		
<b>Negative</b>					
Possible increase traffic on Sea Road South. Need to consult Highways England and assess impact.	✓	✓	✓		
Air quality effects unknown in other roads	✓	✓	✓		
Traffic speeds may not reduce and may increase.	✓	✓	✓		
Traffic flows in side roads west of South Street may increase		✓	✓✓		
Might be little improvement to through traffic flows		✓	✓		

**Key** ✓ = could impact    ✓✓ = could have a significant impact