

CABINET (TRAFFIC AND PARKING) COMMITTEE

19 January 2006

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT - PARCHMENT STREET, WINCHESTER AND SURROUNDING ROADS

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Contact Officer: Neville Crisp Tel No: 01962 848484

RECENT REFERENCES:

- CAB836 – Proposed reversal of one-way traffic flow, Parchment Street, Winchester
– 17 March 2004
- CAB900 – Traffic Management – Parchment Street, Winchester and Surrounding Roads
– 7 July 2004
- CAB937 – Traffic Management – Parchment Street, Winchester and Surrounding Roads
– 13 October 2004
- CAB1045 – Traffic Management – Parchment Street, Winchester and Surrounding Roads
– 29 June 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

An experimental traffic order was introduced on 8th November 2004 reversing the one-way traffic flow in Parchment Street and revoking the one-way traffic order in Middle Brook Street between North Walls and Cossack Lane, together with the introduction of a 'No Right Turn except for cycles' order from North Walls into Middle Brook Street.

The experimental order has now been in place for over 12 months and it is necessary to review this experiment so that a decision can be made to either make the order permanent or for it to be removed before the expiry date of 18 months.

Further to the Cabinet meeting of 29 June 2005 additional traffic surveys have been carried out and air quality data is now available for the 12 month period that the experimental order has been in place. There has been very little correspondence on this matter since that meeting.

The traders of Parchment Street have been asked, through the City Centre Manager and Chamber of Commerce, to provide further supporting evidence of any down-turn in trade. Additional signing provision is being investigated.

Having considered the available evidence, officers conclude that the experiment has, on balance, been a success, although there are still concerns on the timeframe over which air quality data has been collected. The latest traffic survey figures indicate that there has been no conclusive changes to the traffic patterns and volumes in the city centre as a result of the experimental order and consequently suggest that the experimental changes be made permanent.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That the experimental order relating to Parchment Street and Middle Brook Street be made permanent and the City Secretary and Solicitor be authorised to make the necessary order.
- 2 That the introduction of contra-flow cycling in Parchment Street be investigated.
- 3 That the revision to waiting restrictions be investigated to optimise the parking bays in Parchment Street and Middle Brook Street.
- 4 That additional signage be provided from the High Street for 'secondary' shopping areas.

CABINET (TRAFFIC AND PARKING) COMMITTEE19 January 2006TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT - PARCHMENT STREET, WINCHESTER AND SURROUNDING ROADSREPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENTDETAIL:1 Introduction

- 1.1 As a result of Cabinet meetings on 17th March 2004, 7th July 2004 and 13th October 2004 an experimental order was introduced on 8th November 2004 reversing the one-way traffic flow in Parchment Street, Winchester and revoking the one-way traffic flow in Middle Brook Street between North Walls and Cossack Lane. The order also included a 'No Right Turn except cycles' restriction from North Walls into Middle Brook Street. The statement of reasons and schedule for the experimental order are attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The proposals were formally advertised in the Hampshire Chronicle and on site on 29th October 2004. A copy of this notice is attached as Appendix 2.
- 1.3 The order was introduced on an experimental basis as it was not considered possible to accurately predict the impact of the order on the traffic patterns within the town centre and the resultant effects on residents, traders and other road users with various data being collected during the course of the experiment.
- 1.4 The reason for the experimental order was the principle that Parchment Street is a narrow, primarily residential, road which due to its location in relation to the overall road network of Winchester town centre was subject to an unacceptably high volume of traffic.
- 1.5 Although motorists previously using Parchment Street in the north-south direction were entitled to do so the nature of the road was not considered suitable for the high volume of vehicles when there was an alternative route available.
- 1.6 The purpose of the experimental order was to establish the feasibility of reversing the one-way traffic flow in Parchment Street and associated changes in Middle Brook Street and the consequences of so doing on the overall traffic patterns and effect on environmental issues. There are no road safety issues being addressed nor generated as a result of the proposal.
- 1.7 Although the capacity of the main one-way system has coped with the additional volume of traffic generated, the key issues raised by the experimental order are those of its environmental impact on the residents of the roads concerned, the effect on road users in general and a knock-on effect to traders.
- 1.8 Hampshire County Council, the Highway and Traffic Authority, have stated that their Transport Policy and Traffic Management Sections are in agreement with the

proposal. The County Councillor for Eastgate Division, Cllr Mrs Peskett, has confirmed that she has no objections to the scheme progressing as recommended.

2 Response from Formal Advertisements

- 2.1 The response to the formal advertisement was 81 individual letters and 2 petitions as previously reported, including the addendum submitted at the meeting. Since the meeting on 29 June 2005 a further 8 letters have been received comprising 6 letters of objection and 2 letters of support. A revised list of respondents is attached as Appendix 3.
- 2.2 The majority of objectors state that the experimental order has resulted in increased journey distances and times, and corresponding increased pollution and congestion within the town centre, whilst the supporters of the experiment continue to highlight the environmental and quality of life improvements experienced. A revised summary of comments is attached as Appendix 4.
- 2.3 All respondents have been acknowledged and replied to in full and informed of the date of this meeting should they wish to make further personal representation.

3 Response from Consultation

- 3.1 No further consultation has been carried out regarding the experimental changes as officers do not believe that there would be any significant change to the response from the original exercise carried out. For information the summary of replies to the previous consultation is shown in Appendix 5.

4 Traffic Surveys

- 4.1 Additional traffic surveys have been undertaken since the previous report. These show no discernable changes to the traffic volumes in Middle Brook Street, Parchment Street and St Peter Street since the introduction of the experimental order. Figures are not available for Upper Brook Street due to equipment malfunctions, however, the volumes are predicted to be similar to earlier figures. Holiday periods have been avoided to provide reasonably consistent data. Appendix 6 provides a summary of these.
- 4.2 The survey data for North Walls shows dramatic fluctuations and although the data is accurate for the periods of the surveys it cannot be considered to represent a reliable average of the true traffic volume. The volume of traffic using the eastern section of North Walls and the whole length of St Georges Street has increased on average by approximately 16% since the experimental order was introduced.
- 4.3 Traffic volumes on the main arterial routes into the city centre show only minor variations in volumes using these different routes. There is a slight increase in those using Chesil Street in the latest figures which may be a result of the temporary closure of Great Minster Street/St Thomas Street and the effective closure of The Square to through traffic. However, there has been no obvious shift in motorists' travel patterns to suggest that traffic is now using alternative roads to the detriment of other residential streets in or near to the city centre. Appendix 7 provides further detail.

5 Air Quality

- 5.1 Air quality has been constantly monitored throughout the town centre by the City Council's Health and Environment Services since 1997. In November 2003 Winchester City Council declared an Air Quality Management Area for the town centre and has produced an Air Quality Action Plan aimed at removing this designation for Nitrogen dioxide and particles.
- 5.2 There is a known correlation between pollution and vehicle miles travelled and although the air quality monitoring data does not show any significant increase in nitrogen dioxide and particles on the main roads within the town centre, the additional volume of vehicles using the eastern end of the one-way system will inevitably result in additional pollution along this route.
- 5.3 Despite the experiment having now run for over 12 months there is still not sufficient data to determine accurately whether the overall traffic volumes and travel patterns through Winchester have altered sufficiently to have caused a significant impact on air quality. The relevant data is attached as Appendix 8.
- 5.4 As part of the final Air Quality Action Plan it is proposed to conduct a review of the whole traffic management system within Winchester Town Centre. Subject to LTP funding Hampshire County Council will commence this within the financial year 2006/07. Members should be aware that this study may recommend alterations to traffic flows to reduce congestion and therefore improve air quality. This could involve altering traffic patterns in some city centre streets, including Parchment Street, Middle Brook Street, etc.

6 Traders

- 6.1 Details of footfall are available for a number of streets within the town centre and although these do not provide any link to traffic figures or trade turn-over it is notable that the number of pedestrians using Parchment Street has decreased since the experimental order was introduced. It should be noted however that footfall has also reduced in the High Street over the same period. Details have been obtained for May 2004, May 2005 and October 2005 (to correspond with the traffic survey data) and a summary of this data is shown in Appendix 9.
- 6.2 The traders in Parchment Street have stated that they have experienced a significant down-turn in trade since the experimental changes were introduced as a result of motorists no longer passing their shop fronts. These concerns have been formalised through the City Centre Manager and the Chamber of Commerce.
- 6.3 The traders have not submitted certified accounts as evidence of this loss of business. However, the City Centre Manager has been requested to produce a statement on their behalf which summarises their objections to the experiment and the reasons for the reduction in retail sales performance, i.e. turnover, since the experiment was introduced. This is not yet available but should be available for the meeting.
- 6.4 Efforts are currently being made to support the traders by increasing the prominence of Parchment Street. One significant initiative includes a public art project to commission a Hampshire artist to design and erect a new feature at the junction of Parchment Street and St George's Street. This would draw attention to the street

and encourage exploration by shoppers and leisure visitors alike. The draft artist's brief was circulated in August 2005 to Cabinet for comment and a further report will be forthcoming to request a capital allocation for this project. Two artists have expressed interest and early availability for the commission, and have been asked to submit initial concepts for consideration by leading Members, traders and officers.

7 Contra-flow Cycling

- 7.1 Due to the uncertainty of whether the experimental order would be made permanent no significant work has been carried out on the introduction of contra-flow cycling in Parchment Street due to the complex authorisation process required and the potentially abortive work involved.
- 7.2 The traffic volumes and speeds in Parchment Street since the experimental changes were introduced will permit an unsegregated contra-flow cycling to be installed. A revised junction layout at North Walls, similar to that at Middle Brook Street, would allow cyclists to enter using a filter lane whilst maintaining the no-entry for motor vehicles.
- 7.3 Cyclists would almost certainly be required to dismount before reaching St Georges Street, probably at the existing speed ramp, although the exact details are yet to be finalised.

8 Waiting Restrictions

- 8.1 If the experimental order changes are made permanent the existing waiting restrictions in Parchment Street and Middle Brook Street will be reviewed accordingly. It is likely that the residents permit parking bays in Parchment Street and Middle Brook Street will be revised to take account of the changed traffic flows and removal of the contra-flow cycle lane. The opportunity will be taken to maximise the amount of on-street parking whilst maintaining clear access thus generating additional on-street parking spaces. It is anticipated that this will also include the introduction of limited waiting parking at the St Georges Street end of Parchment Street which should provide benefits for traders.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 It is considered appropriate to report a recent legal case (Andrews – v – Reading Borough Council) where Reading Borough Council were sued for compensation to cover the cost of installing double-glazing due to the increased noise from traffic passing the claimant's property due to increased traffic volumes resulting from traffic management alterations carried out by the Council.
- 9.2 The most recent traffic surveys show that the volume of vehicles using the main one-way route – North Walls, Union Street, Friarsgate, St Georges Street – has settled down to levels not dissimilar to those before the experimental changes were introduced. Consequently it is unlikely that any action taken against the City Council would have sufficient grounds to proceed.
- 9.3 Legal precedent has been set that businesses are not liable to compensation for loss or profit as a result of traffic management schemes.

10 Conclusion

- 10.1 The experimental traffic order has undoubtedly resulted in a significantly better environment and quality of life for the residents of Parchment Street and Middle Brook Street. It may also result in some decrease in amenity for those residents in the other streets immediately affected. However any increase in traffic volumes does not appear to have resulted in increases in Nitrogen dioxide above those recorded in other roads not directly affected by the experiment.
- 10.3 Motorists who previously used Parchment Street to short cut the main one-way system now travel slightly further through Winchester thus causing them additional expense in terms of fuel used and extended journey times combined with air quality and environmental changes due to this changed travel pattern. However, the overall number of vehicles entering Winchester via City Road/North Walls appears to have fallen with an increase in vehicles travelling in to the city centre on Chesil Street.
- 10.4 The arguments for and against making the experimental change permanent or removing it have not changed. They are often strongly expressed and are polarised between those residents who benefit greatly and those who do not – a smaller number of residents and a larger number of motorists. The majority of those making comments have called is for the experimental order to be withdrawn.
- 10.5 The decision Cabinet has to make is to weigh the substantial benefits achieved for the residents of Parchment Street against the inconvenience or detriment suffered by others. There is no simple or 'scientific' mechanism by which this can be done. However, what can be demonstrated is that the impact of the experimental order on traffic flows has not resulted in any significant change in traffic volume or reduction in air quality. Motorists do not have a 'right' to the shortest route between two points regardless of the impact on residential amenity. The principle that motorists should be using the most suitable route for traversing the town centre thus avoiding a high level of impact on Parchment Street was the basis for recommending that the experimental order be introduced and this still holds true when considering whether or not it should be made permanent.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

11 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 11.1 This proposal is in keeping with the Corporate Strategy and the Council's objectives to encourage and participate in open debate about the future with our residents and to promote a more pleasant environment to live in.

12 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 12.1 The cost of implementing the traffic regulation order and permanent carriageway reconstruction work is covered by the Traffic Management agreement with Hampshire County Council.

13 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

- 13.1 Correspondence on Development Services files Ref: 370201, 380902, 810100, 810402 & 810402-09.

14 APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Experimental order statement of reasons and schedule

Appendix 2: Public notice as advertised

Appendix 3: List of respondents to public notices

Appendix 4: Summary of respondents' comments

Appendix 5: Summary of questionnaire replies

Appendix 6: Summary of traffic survey data

Appendix 7: Summary of traffic volumes on arterial routes

Appendix 8: Summary of air quality data

Appendix 9: Summary of footfall data