

To: Ashford Joint Transportation Board
By: Head of Transportation, Kent County Council
Date: 10 June 2014
Subject: Somerset Road / North Street, Ashford – Pedestrian Safety Improvements
Classification: Information Only

Summary: This report updates Members on the recent scheme consultation for this junction.

Introduction

1. This junction forms the point where southbound traffic approaching Ashford town centre joins the former ring road at a three-arm signalised junction. It is well used by pedestrians and crossing facilities are in place.
2. The County Council carries out an annual review of injury crashes occurring on its network, and this identified a cluster of crashes occurring at this junction. In the three year review period, six crashes were identified, of which four involved pedestrians and another involved a cyclist.
3. In view of this, resources have been made available to investigate and progress potential safety improvements. An outline design has been drawn up and can be viewed in Appendix A, along with consultation documents that include a background information leaflet and “Frequently Asked Questions”.

Public consultation

4. The public consultation took place between 25 April and 16 May 2014, inviting comment upon the proposals, and took the form of the following:
 - Leaflets delivered to nearby residents and businesses.
 - Posters placed on site.
 - Direct notification to local representatives, bus companies, emergency services and other statutory consultees.
 - Notification to the local press (the consultation has subsequently received coverage).
 - Drawings and background information were made available on KCC’s consultation website.
 - Notification via KCC’s social media outlet.
5. Respondents were asked to provide comments that maybe helpful for the progression of the scheme, and these are summarised in Appendix B.

Analysis of responses

6. A total of 7 responses were received. In general the responses were supportive of the changes being made.

7. A request was made for pedestrian guard railing, as the proposals do not include this. When the ring road was converted to two-way traffic, there was a conscious decision to minimise the use of guard railing. These proposals advocate a similar design to that used at the New Street / Forge Lane junction, whereby raised kerbing is used to guide pedestrians, rather than guard rails (see Appendix C). There is no evidence to date that this has caused a safety issue, however this can be kept under constant review.
8. The request to extend the splitter island northwards on the north side of the junction can be considered in the detailed design phase, as can a re-examination of the space available for pedestrians in the central reservations. The widening of the road on the southern side is utilising existing public highway, and as such should not be impinging upon potential development space.
9. Kent Police has raised no objection and mentioned some technical issues that again can be addressed at the detailed design phase and do not impact upon the overall scheme principles.
10. A response to the progression of the scheme has been received from British Telecom. There are fibre optic cables located in the area where the proposed road widening is taking place, and the costs associated with relocating this apparatus are anticipated to be of a significant amount. This means that the scheme will have to be re-designed and re-appraised, in an attempt to mitigate these costs. This has not been possible to complete in the timeframe prior to the writing of this report, and is an ongoing piece of work.

Conclusion

11. The responses received have been generally supportive of the scheme design principles. Most comments can be addressed as a detailed design matter.
12. However the response received from British Telecom has necessitated a significant scheme design review. This work will continue to be progressed through the current financial year 2014/15, with updates provided to this Board in the Highway Works Programme report or a separate report, as deemed necessary.

Background documents: None

Appendices

Appendix A – Consultation documents
Appendix B – Summary of responses
Appendix C – New Street / Forge Lane junction

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Proposed Highway Improvement Scheme

Somerset Road / North Street, Ashford

Pedestrian safety improvements

What is being proposed?

Proposals have been drawn up to improve the layout of this traffic signal junction, by amending the existing **pedestrian crossings** with the addition of push buttons on the central reservations, and by ‘staggering’ the crossing points. We are also proposing the installation of a **central reservation** between North Street and Wellesley Road.

Why do we want to do this work?

To improve road safety following a number of injury crashes at this location, a large proportion involving pedestrians and cyclists. The proposals have a beneficial side-effect of increasing the capacity of the junction to deal with the amount of vehicles that use it, and thus **improving traffic flow** at the busiest times of the day. The central reservation is intended to address the problem of vehicles undertaking u-turns along this stretch of road.

How are we consulting on these proposals?

- More details, including plans and “Frequently Asked Questions”, will be made available on our website at www.consultation.kent.gov.uk
- Leaflets delivered to nearby residents and businesses
- Letters sent to statutory consultees, e.g. Emergency Services, Bus Companies.
- Posters placed on site.
- Temporary road signs placed on site, to inform all road users.

When will this take place?

The consultation is between Friday 25 April and Friday 16 May 2014. All responses will be collated and the results reported to the Ashford Joint Transportation Board meeting on Tuesday 10 June 2014.

How do I make my views known?

Your views must be submitted **in writing** by Friday 16 May 2014, returned by post to:-

FAO Steve Darling, Kent County Council
Ashford Highway Depot
Javelin Way
ASHFORD
Kent TN24 8AD

Alternatively, feedback can be emailed to traffic.schemes@kent.gov.uk with the subject heading “*Somerset Road, Ashford - Consultation*”.

Frequently Asked Questions

Somerset Road / North Street, Ashford

Pedestrian safety improvements

Why are the crossings staggered?

There is evidence from the crashes that have occurred, that pedestrians become 'stranded' in the central reservation, and do not have the benefit of signals to tell them when it is safe to cross. This is because they have to cross both sides of the road in 'one go', and less mobile people may not be able to achieve this, leading to conflict occurring between pedestrians and vehicles. The new design will allow pedestrians access to push buttons in the central reservation, and a safer opportunity to cross.

What will be the effect upon traffic flow?

We have modelled the impact of the proposals, using computer software. Although no predications can be 100% accurate, the indications are that traffic queues should reduce on all roads leading into the junction. This should be most noticeable on Somerset Road (eastbound) in the mornings, and Somerset Road (westbound) in the afternoons.

Why is this?

At present, the layout of the junction means that all the traffic has to stop, to allow pedestrians to cross under a red light. With the revised layout, pedestrians will be able to cross one half of the road, whilst traffic is still moving elsewhere.

How much will this all cost?

The current indicative budget that has been set aside in the 2014/15 financial year is £100,000. A more detailed cost estimate is being worked upon. There remain some unknowns, such as the cost of diverting public utility services (such as telephone cables). This is because the road needs to be widened on the southern side of the junction.

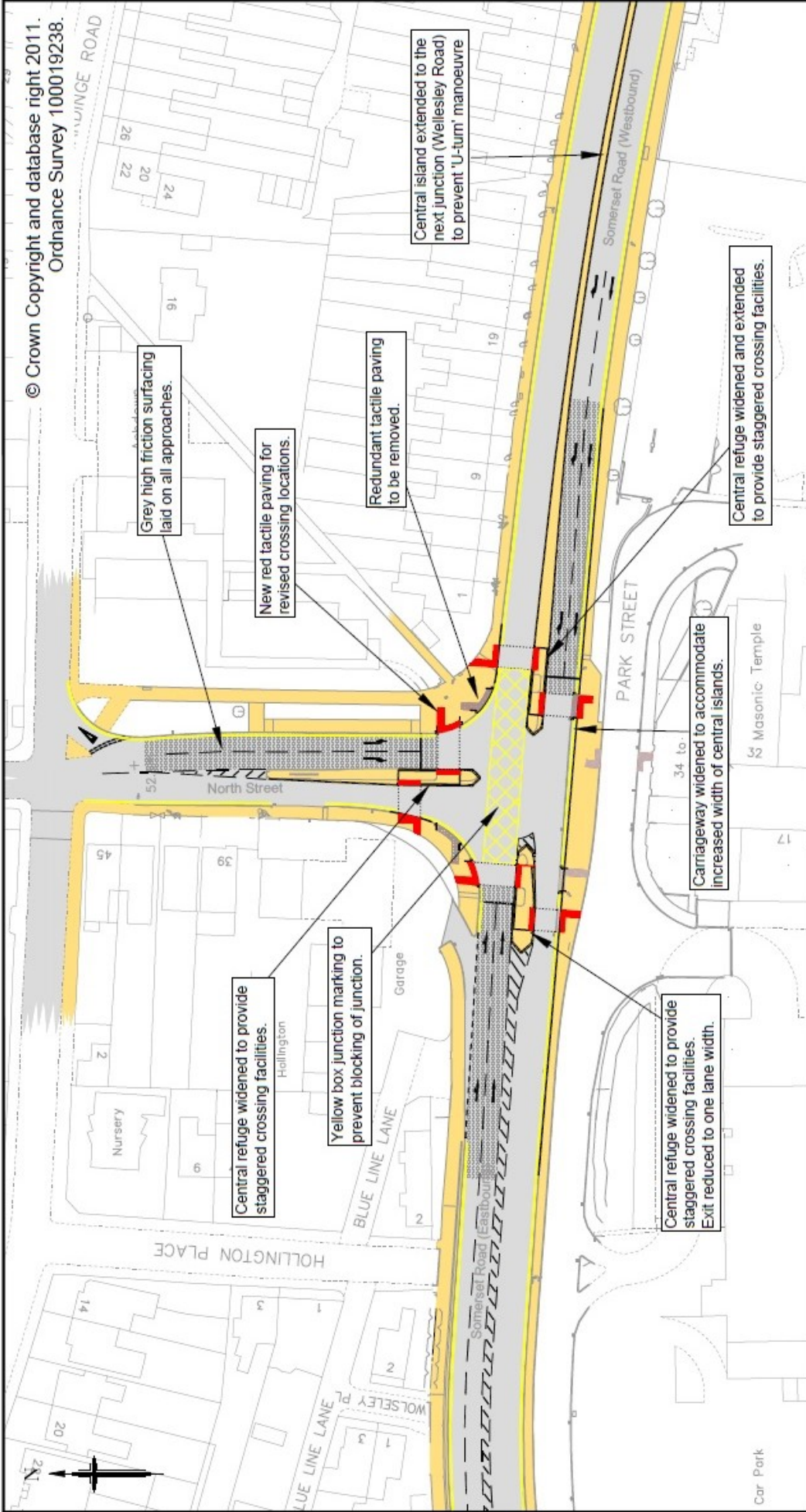
Is this a good use of public funds?

Department for Transport statistics indicate that the average cost of dealing with an injury crash amounts to £75,000. Therefore if the scheme achieves its target of reducing crashes, it will effectively pay for itself over a period of time, depending upon the initial financial outlay and the eventual amount of crash reduction. This analysis does not take into account the wider impact on society, both in terms of emotional distress to the people, families and witnesses directly and indirectly affected, as well as to the wider public purse through the emergency services, NHS and social services.

How long will the scheme take to build?

Subject to the scheme being approved and overall budget confirmed, the proposals shown on the plans should take 4 weeks to construct.

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<p>Existing / Proposed Carriageway.</p>		<p>Existing / Proposed Pedestrian Footpath / Island</p>		<p>Project</p>		<p>Scale</p>		<p>Drawing status</p>		<p>Drawing number</p>	
<p>Grey</p>		<p>Yellow</p>		<p>Somerset Road / North Street Ashford</p>		<p>1:1000 at A4</p>		<p>Consultation</p>		<p>AS/CRM/0066/001</p>	
<p>15/04/14</p>		<p>Central Island Extended</p>		<p>Approved</p>		<p>Do not scale</p>		<p>Consultation</p>		<p>Rev A</p>	
Rev	Revision Date	Purpose of revision	GDL	Drawn	Checked	SD	SD	<p>Scale</p>		<p>Drawing number</p>	
A	15/04/14	Central Island Extended	GDL	Drawn	Checked	SD	SD	<p>1:1000 at A4</p>		<p>AS/CRM/0066/001</p>	
<p>This drawing is not to be used in whole or part other than for the intended purpose and project as defined on this drawing. Refer to the contract for full terms and conditions.</p>											



Somerset Road / North Street
Ashford

Drawing title
Pedestrian Safety Improvements
Consultation Plan

Drawing status
Consultation

Scale
1:1000 at A4

Drawing number
AS/CRM/0066/001

Project
Somerset Road / North Street
Ashford

Approved

Checked

Drawn

SD

SD

SD

SD

SD

SD

SD

SD

SD

SD

Appendix B – Summary of responses

Respondent	Comments
Guide Dogs Association	Staggering of crossings a good idea. Can guard railing be considered to aid navigation?
Cllr Harold Apps (ABC Ward Councillor)	Fully supports the proposals
Cllr Graham Galpin (ABC Portfolio Holder for the Town Centre & Urban Economy)	Central reservations may overflow at peak times. Widening the road into Edinburgh Road space can cause some infringement into future development of the area.
Local employee	Current crossing is dangerous as there is no way to see if the lights are red or green, so you go when you think you can which is unsafe.
Local resident	Pleased with the proposed alterations. Drivers emerging from garage ignore the 'No u-turn', can the central reservation be extended towards Canterbury to address this?
Kent Police	Supports the proposals in principle. Technical queries over the use of 'right hand' staggered crossings, the right turn arrow markings on the east arm, and the extent of high friction surfacing being proposed.
British Telecom	Advises of the requirement to relocate fibre optic cables and provides some indicative costs and suggests further work to reduce these costs.

Appendix C – New Street / Forge Lane junction

