St Dunstan’s Area Highway Improvement Proposals

To: Canterbury Joint Transportation Board 17th February 2015
By: Tim Read – Head of Transportation
Classification: Unrestricted
Ward: Westgate, St Stephens

Recommendation:
1. Recommend approval of the 20mph speed limit
2. Recommend approval of the width restriction, but include an exemption for Taxis

1.0 Introduction and Background

1.1 Following the removal of the Westgate Towers experimental scheme which ran between April 2012 and April 2013, a consultation and public exhibition was carried out to gauge the community’s views on what should happen to the St Dunstan’s area.

1.2 The consultation presented the community with a range of options of potential layouts, including keeping the pre-trial layout or the experimental layout. Alongside this a number of features were also included. Once the consultation was complete the decision was taken that due to the overwhelming support for Option E, the traffic movements would remain as the pre-trial situation. A Steering Group was set up which was chaired by David Brazier the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, Peter Vickery-Jones as Deputy and members including, local KCC elected members, Canterbury City Council, local business representatives and the bus operator.

Using the comments received from the consultation, the Steering Group decided that:
• A width restriction should be introduced
• A crossing would be put back across Station Road West
• The widened footway in Lower St Dunstan’s Street would be retained
• A 20mph speed limit should be introduced in the area
• The HGV restriction in the trial should be retained

There were also comments related to the safety of pedestrians crossing North Lane and many comments about improving the area for pedestrians.

1.3 This report is to consider the objections received from the advertised speed, weight and width restrictions. It also sets out the issues regarding the use of guard rail ing in the scheme and is seeking a recommendation from the JTB on installing railings or not.
2.0 Guard Railing

2.1 The new scheme designed, following the full consultation, included the installation of guard railing to guide pedestrians to use the new pedestrian crossing in Station Road West and the existing crossing in North Lane. During the consultation 76 responses were received requesting that railings were installed to protect pedestrians and guide them to the crossings. Correspondence was also received supporting the installation of railings. Conversely correspondence has also been received supporting the removal of railings from the scheme.

2.2 The removal of the trial scheme was subject to a stage 3 safety audit and at that time the safety auditor did not raise an issue about the absence of railing.

2.3 There are passionate opinions on both the pro and anti-railing camps and both sides could give a good argument for their case. On balance, the barriers will not be installed at this time to see how the area settles down once opened up fully with the changes in place. There is an intention to look at some enhanced carriageway surfacing in the area and, if this happens, it is likely to further affect driver behaviour. If it becomes clear that the railings are needed they can be installed quickly.

3.0 20 mph Speed Limit

3.1 Upon local advertisement of intentions to introduce a 20mph speed limit in the St Dunstan's area (see Annex 1) a total of 1 objection was received and 6 letters of support. Kent Police did not raise any objections but request that standard regulations are followed. The single objection was based upon the proposals potential to increase pollution levels. A copy of the responses will be made available for inspection at the JTB meeting.

4.0 Width Restriction

4.1 It is considered that limiting traffic by means of a 6'6" width restriction would be the most appropriate method to protect the towers from vehicular damage. The 6'6" restriction was used as this is the most common restriction used nationally making it consistent and easier for drivers to understand. A 6'6" width restriction will exclude most lorries. The restriction is proposed for St Dunstan’s Street between (but not including) its junctions with North Lane and Pound Lane on the north-eastern side of the carriageway only, through the Westgate Towers.

4.2 The notice of intent to introduce a 6'6" width restriction on St Dunstan’s Street, through the Westgate Towers was advertised in the Kentish Gazette & Canterbury Extra week ending 9th January 2015. In addition public notices were erected on site in the vicinity of the Towers. Other statutory and non-statutory consultees were sent copies of the documents.

4.3 A total of 16 objections and a petition signed by 45 taxi drivers against the proposals have been received. There were 2 letters of support. In addition Canterbury City Council wrote in support of the proposed width limit but they do not support the exemption for buses and an additional 1 resident supported a width restriction but not one as restrictive as 6'6". A summary of the representations made during the consultation period can be found in Annex 2 along with our comments. A copy of the responses will be made available for inspection at the JTB meeting.
4.4 The main objection received related to the actual specified width of the restriction and the effect that it would have on the taxi trade. To overcome this objection it is recommended that Taxi and Private Hire vehicles are exempt from the Order.

5.0 **Weight Restriction**

5.1 The experimental scheme included a temporary weight limit Order for North Canterbury to restrict HGVs except for access. The post experiment consultation showed support for this element to be reintroduced with a permanent weight limit Order.

5.2 The notice of intent to introduce a 7.5 tonne weight restriction for various roads in North Canterbury was advertised in the Kentish Gazette, Whitstable Gazette & Canterbury Extra week ending 9th January 2015. In addition notices were sent to each of the Parish Councils for display on noticeboards. Other statutory and non-statutory consultees were sent copies of the documents.

5.3 A total of 78 objections were received including an objection from Kent Police. There were 23 letters of support.

5.4 Due to the number of objections and the implications for villages to the north of Canterbury the order will not be progressed subject a detailed investigation of the implications of a wider HGV ban has for the area to the north of Canterbury.

6.0 **Recommendation**

1. Recommend approval of the 20mph speed limit
2. Recommend approval of the width restriction, but include an exemption for Taxis

Contact Officers: Andrew Westwood (03000 411675)
Reporting to: Tim Read, Head of Transportation (03000 411662)

**Annex List**

| Annex 1 | Outline plan |
| ANNEX 2 | Summary of consultation responses for proposed 6’6” width limit |

**Background Papers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Details of where to access copy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Annex 2: Summary of consultation responses for proposed 6'6" width restriction

**THE KENT COUNTY COUNCIL (ST DUNSTANS STREET, THE DISTRICT OF CANTERBURY) (6’ 6” WIDTH RESTRICTION) ORDER 2015**

Our Ref: T/24/09/2014/C/484

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Level of support</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>KCC Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Petition signed by 45 taxi drivers</td>
<td>Objection</td>
<td>Concerned that proposals will restrict many of their vehicles particularly those providing wheelchair facilities. Concern that disabled customers would be discriminated against as they would pay for longer journeys via alternative route.</td>
<td>Include an exemption for Taxi and Private Hire vehicles in the Order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Irons (Taxi representative)</td>
<td>Objection</td>
<td>Majority of their taxis exceed 6’ 6” and would therefore be prevented access. This would add to journey cost &amp; time as well as congestion and pollution. Considers this goes against our Transport Plan &amp; working towards better transport interchange in the City.</td>
<td>An exemption for taxis will be added to the Order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent Police</td>
<td>Objection</td>
<td>Width restriction is very short in length and drivers may be tempted to take a chance and ignore the restriction. Considers the environmental restriction is inappropriate given the number of vehicles that that will be exempt. This would require constant enforcement which the police cannot commit to currently.</td>
<td>This is a possibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stagecoach</td>
<td>Objection</td>
<td>Exemption of local buses would limit success of objective. They consider it no longer practicable to operate full sized buses through the towers due to the risk of damage to both bus and Towers. In addition the driver has restricted rearward vision when negotiating the Towers which causes a danger to other road users esp pedestrians and cyclists. Suggest a width restriction of 2.3m (7’ 6”) an applied to all vehicles with reasonable advanced warning.</td>
<td>The width restriction can be made less restrictive if considered appropriate but will have less success in the preservation of the Towers and other variations are less likely to be widely understood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cllr Hirst</td>
<td>Objection</td>
<td>6’6” restriction is too narrow, will restrict many vehicles and add to congestion elsewhere.</td>
<td>The width restriction can be made less restrictive if considered appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residency</td>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Reason</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident x 2</td>
<td>Objection</td>
<td>Restriction will prevent rail replacement buses from passing through the towers. Request to exempt all buses.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident x 7</td>
<td>Objection</td>
<td>Order will prevent access by buses, taxi’s &amp; emergency vehicles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident x 4</td>
<td>Objection</td>
<td>Order not suitable for current traffic in City and will prevent many normal cars from access through the Towers including a number of taxis as well as minibuses and the Lord Mayors car. Considers 6’6” is too restrictive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident x 4</td>
<td>Objection</td>
<td>Diversion of larger vehicles would increase fuel usage, journey time, congestion and pollution levels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident x 2</td>
<td>Objection</td>
<td>Some larger traffic will re-route via Rough Common (C-Class roads) and other routes which are less suitable and will encounter added dangers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canterbury City Council</td>
<td>Support (except exemption for buses)</td>
<td>Order required to protect the narrow archway at the Towers which are a Scheduled Ancient Monument and Grade 1 listed structure and recognised nationally as the best preserved medieval gateway in the country. Structural and visual surveys</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

but will have less success in the preservation of the Towers and other variations are less likely to be widely understood.

Order includes exemptions for buses and emergency vehicles and an exemption for taxis will be added.

Towers are being damaged by inappropriately sized vehicles passing through them. A 6’6” restriction would affect some large cars. A wider restriction will limit the success of the preservation of the Towers but should it be considered appropriate the Order could be made less restrictive. A 6’6” restriction is widely used and more likely to be understood than other variations.

If customer’s vehicle exceeds 6’6” then yes an alternative route would be required. This will be displaced over a number of alternative routes depending upon origins and destinations.

This is a possibility.

Comments are noted.
shown Towers suffered from significant vehicle impact damage. Do not support exemption for buses as they are just as likely to cause damage. Request bollards to make TRO self-enforcing.

| Mr Vye (County Councillor) | Support | Very much in favour of restriction to prevent HGVs and coaches trying to navigate the Towers. Strong local desire for a bus service which can navigate the Towers and thus would not support any proposals for a physical barrier limiting vehicles wider than 6’6”.

Comments are noted. |

| Resident x 2 | Support | - |

THE KENT COUNTY COUNCIL (ST DUNSTANS STREET, THE DISTRICT OF CANTERBURY) (6’6” WIDTH RESTRICTION) ORDER 2014

Our Ref: T/24/09/2014/C/484