



Meeting: Transport Working Party

Date: 15th January 2015

Wards Affected: Tormohun

Report Title: Torquay Town Centre Access

Is the decision a key decision? No

When does the recommendation need to be implemented? At the Meeting

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1. Purpose and Introduction

- 1.1 This report is in response to Growth Deal funding being agreed, in principle, by the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to change how traffic reaches Torquay Town Centre.
- 1.2 Last year Torbay Council successfully submitted an Outline Business Case to the LEP to secure funding for town centre traffic improvements in Torquay from Torre to Castle Circus, including reversing the flow of traffic along Union Street, and, improving junctions at Castle Circus, Abbey Road / Tor Hill Road, and at the top and bottom of Trematon Avenue.
- 1.3 These changes will help boost the local economy and promote further growth by providing a better-quality direct 'entrance' from the gateway into the Bay at the new South Devon Link Road junction.
- 1.4 The scheme, which includes improvements for pedestrians and cyclists, will replace the current circuitous and sometimes congested route that all vehicles currently must take, improving journeys for businesses, shoppers, visitors and commuters by all modes.
- 1.5 Following traffic modelling work based upon traffic surveys undertaken in September / October of last year, detailed analysis of potential scheme options has been undertaken. As well as providing options for recommendation by the Transport Working Party this modelling will inform the business case for approval of funding from the LEP.

2. Proposed Decision

2.1 It is recommended that members approve the proposals outlined under Option 1 in 5.2, to implement the proposed changes to traffic flow entering and exiting the Town Centre, and also approve proposals to alter key junctions in the Town Centre to accommodate this change, as outlined in 5.7 to 5.11 inclusive below.

3. Reason for Decision

3.1 Option 1 allows much improved access, both in terms of time and safety, for all modes into the town centre and unlike other options brings additional on-street metered parking on Union Street between Castle Circus and Trematon Avenue (potentially up to 9 spaces). It allows more opportunity to enhance the streetscene of Castle Circus junction together with pedestrian crossing facilities.

3.2 Further benefits are retention of the parking facilities at the side of the magistrates court, and ensures the least loss of existing parking north of Trematon Avenue on Union Street (up to 3), and retention of the loading bay in front of the public house.

3.3 By making this decision, Members will enable Officers to develop a full business case to confirm the funding by the LEP this March, with works commencing in Autumn 2015.

Supporting Information

4. Position

- 4.1 For over 2 decades there has been a debate about changing traffic routes into Torquay Town Centre. The current traffic flow towards the Town Centre is less than direct in contrast to the 'exit' routes which are much easier to navigate and are direct. This discourages movement into the town centre and, at times, the circuitous route can be difficult especially for shoppers and visitors and therefore detracting from the attractiveness of Torquay Town Centre as a shopping destination.
- 4.2 Pedestrian and cycle connections to the town centre can also be difficult to navigate and conflict with highway traffic. As such the proposed improvements, as well as improving the navigation for vehicular traffic, would encourage walking and cycling especially for shorter journeys helping improve local air quality and the environment.
- 4.3 The current indirect route is an obstacle to growth and regeneration. With these proposed improvements to the junctions within the Town Centre combined with those now due to commence along the key route into the Bay from the South Devon Link Road, these improvements will also greatly address the issues and allow for an improved flow of traffic towards the town centre.
- 4.4 With the South Devon Link Road due to be completed towards the end of this year and funding approved for the Torquay Gateway Improvement Scheme, there will be a direct major road link to the M5 and beyond, which has for many years been identified as a major barrier to investment in the area. It is vitally important, therefore, that the entrance to the Town Centre supports these significant improvements.
- 4.5 The improvement of all transport infrastructure for all users will stimulate growth in the local economy by improving accessibility to the area and to markets and will support the regeneration of the economy and support diversification away from the traditional tourist areas, as well as that traditional industry itself.
- 4.6 The resultant affect of the proposal would be significant economic benefits through increased patronage of the town centre and growth areas in Torquay. There would be increased health benefits through the improved cycling and walking infrastructure. In terms of value for money, the scheme scores highly according to the Government's WebTAG criteria used for assessing major schemes.
- 4.7 The overall concept to change traffic flow into the Town Centre has the support of businesses, the local ward partnership and Councillors. The following groups have shown support:
- Torre Traders
 - Torre & Upton Community Partnership
 - Torquay Neighbourhood Forum
 - Town Centre's Company

- Torquay BID, and
- Torre Action Group.

- 4.8 Aspects of the scheme and aims of the proposals, such as the redirection of traffic and the improvement of access to the Town Centre have also been detailed within the Torquay Neighbourhood Plan and are included in the Torbay Local Plan.
- 4.9 The Magistrates Court have stated it is essential to retain parking for the prison van as is for operational and security grounds, whilst Stagecoach South West have supported access to Castle Circus southbound.
- 4.10 A public exhibition was held on the 7th January 2015 at the Town Hall, the results of which will be reported verbally to Committee.
- 4.11 The proposal has been presented and supported, in principle, by this Working Party previously. With funding in principle now agreed by the LEP, it is essential that a preferred scheme business case is now developed and presented in March for final approval, so that this project can commence in September 2015 to meet the LEP funding deadline.

5. Possibilities and Options

- 5.1 The Working Party is requested to consider whether they wish to support the implementation of the scheme recommended to them by Officers as detailed below in 5.2. Alternative options to managing traffic south of Trematon Avenue along Union Street are also shown, together with their relative benefits and disadvantages.
- 5.2 Option 1: Allow traffic to move southbound on Union Street from Laburnum Row to Trematon Avenue, then, giving way to traffic coming up from Castle Circus, enter the existing gyratory system down Trematon Avenue to Lymington Road and Castle Circus.

Benefits	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New on street parking on Union Street between Castle Circus and Trematon Avenue • Pedestrian crossing improvement at Union Street / Trematon Avenue • No impact on prison van parking • Improved road safety for vehicles on Trematon Avenue • Allows for more streetscene improvement at Castle Circus without impact on traffic flow • Works in tandem with new town centre cycle route now under construction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slightly less direct route for vehicles, but as no signals required at the bottom of Union Street in front of Connections, little in terms of time delay

<p>from Torre to Town Centre (funded by the Local Sustainable Transport Fund)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes traffic past two major car parks. 	
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5.3 Option 2: Allow traffic to move southbound on Union Street from Laburnum Row to Trematon Avenue, then, giving way to traffic coming up from Castle Circus, buses and cycles only to proceed southbound to Castle Circus.

Benefits	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct route for bus and cycles promotes sustainable travel • No impact on prison van parking • Improved road safety for vehicles on Trematon Avenue • Bus stop at Connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No new on street parking on Union Street between Castle Circus and Trematon Avenue • Increased works to Castle Circus required, including full signalisation, could impact on ability to enhance streetscene • May require bus priority signals at Union Street / Trematon Avenue junction • Loss of parking at Union Street / Trematon Avenue junction • Pedestrian crossing ability affected at Union Street / Trematon Avenue • Some bus services relocated from library

5.4 Option 3: Allow traffic to move southbound on Union Street from Laburnum Row to Trematon Avenue, then, giving way to traffic coming up from Castle Circus via signal control, proceed southbound to Castle Circus.

Benefits	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most direct route to town centre • No impact on prison van parking • Improved road safety for vehicles on Trematon Avenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More traffic on busy section of Union Street • Bus stop at Connections holds traffic up • No new on street parking on Union Street between Castle Circus and Trematon Avenue • Increased works to Castle Circus required, including full signalisation, and less enhancement of streetscene • May require loading bay by public house to be relocated and / or some bus stops at Electric House to be moved

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of parking at Union Street / Trematon Avenue junction • Pedestrian crossing ability affected at Union Street / Trematon Avenue and further down towards Castle Circus • Some bus services relocated from library • Traffic diverted away from two major car parks • Likely delay greater than using the existing gyratory system due to traffic volume, bus stop, and new signals
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- 5.5 Option 4: The Do Nothing Scheme would leave traffic flow unaltered in the town and no improvements to any of the junctions, given that the Growth Deal funding from the LEP will be forfeited.
- 5.6 Detailed design of the scheme and other junctions at Laburnum Row / Union Street, Trematon Avenue/ Lymington Road, Castle Circus, and Tor Hill Road / Abbey Road will be carried out for the full business case to be presented to the LEP in March. The Business Case including detailed design work will be posted on the Council's website at:
<http://www.torbay.gov.uk/index/yourservices/transportandstreets/transportpolicy/localtransportboard/ttca.htm>.
- 5.7 However, given future forecasts of traffic growth and traffic coming up Union Street from Castle Circus predicted to still be greater during the peak periods than traffic travelling southbound on Union Street from Torre, priority has been afforded to the northbound traffic in the interests of operational capacity and road safety.
- 5.8 At Trematon Avenue / Lymington Road, to accommodate the predicted growth in traffic and to maintain vehicle flow, junction modifications are required which could necessitate the prohibiting of traffic entering Thurlow Road from Trematon Avenue. If this particular movement were allowed, a toucan crossing would be essential to connect this new high profile cycle route, potentially causing delay to traffic. The on-street metered parking on Trematon Avenue will be relocated to the car park side adjacent to the footway benefiting pedestrian safety, as well as potentially allowing extra spaces to be provided.
- 5.9 At Castle Circus, Options 2 and 3 above allowing traffic to travel southbound on Union Street requires significant alteration to the junction with full signalisation and reduction of the two existing central islands. Option 1 does not necessitate any radical changes, but does afford the opportunity to provide much needed public realm and street scene enhancement. It also allocates the largest share of the available LEP funding to this junction, given the relatively light touch modifications that would occur elsewhere.

- 5.10 At Tor Hill Road / Abbey Road, the junction can be modified to permit a right turn into Tor Hill Road (North) from the Castle Circus direction. Having discounted a roundabout on operational and land availability grounds, a simple signal junction is the optimum solution to enable convenient access northbound.
- 5.11 At Brunswick Square, a bus stop in front of the car park and an associated pedestrian crossing given access for both bus and car park users to access the local shops will be provided. There will be slight alterations to the build out currently located at Union Street / Laburnum Row to accommodate the change in traffic flow. Parking between here and Trematon Avenue will remain unchanged to ensure safe access and visibility from Plum Road.
- 5.12 Given the traffic forecasts, modelling, and preliminary design work, Option 1 is the recommended scheme meeting the objective of providing direct access to the Town Centre without restriction or delay, whilst also ensuring all road users especially vulnerable ones benefit from improvements too.
- 5.13 Option 1 brings income benefits directly to the Council through additional parking income as well as gives real support to economic growth and recovery to the Town Centre and Torre, showing Torquay and the Bay is open, accessible and welcoming for all.

6. Fair Decision Making

- 6.1 Consultation on whether to allow traffic to move southbound along Union Street between Trematon Avenue and Castle Circus has been carried out via a press release, on line website, and public exhibition on 7th January. As part of the LEP funding process the principle of the scheme has also been discussed with key political, business, commercial, and residential sectors since early last year. There will also be a 4-week opportunity to comment further on the final designs included with the Business Case to be submitted in March during February / March. A verbal report on the outcome of the consultation will be provided at the Working Party, but as stated in Paragraphs 4.8 to 4.11, support for the principle is strong.

7. Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

- 7.1 A maximum funding for the scheme of £400,000 has been agreed in principle by the LEP with an additional £200,000 contribution required from the Council as match funding which has been approved by Council as part of the Capital Plan.

8. Risks

- 8.1 If a decision is not agreed by Transport Working Party, a full business case will not be submitted to the March LEP meeting, delaying approval of the funding and thus putting back the scheme implementation. The Torquay Town Centre Access Bid was prioritised by the LEP for being deliverable this financial year, thus any delay that

might risk this could jeopardise the overall funding support from the LEP. There would be no guarantee that such funding would be available at a future time as other competing schemes become “shovel ready”.

- 8.2 All options are deliverable, however if it is decided not to allow traffic to move southbound into the Town Centre from Torre towards Trematon Avenue, no funding at all will be available from the LEP to implement any of the other junction improvement proposals.

Appendices

1. Union Street - Trematon Avenue (Courts - Castle C) - Up only with priority
2. Union Street - Trematon Avenue (Courts - Castle C) - Bus down only
3. Union Street - Trematon Avenue (Courts - Castle C) - All down
4. Union Street - Trematon Avenue (Courts - Castle C) - Up only & no priority.
5. Castle Circus
6. Tor Hill Road
7. Lymington Road - Trematon Avenue - No access to Thurlow from Trematon Ave
8. Lymington Road - Trematon Avenue - Toucan crossing
9. Laburnum Row / Union Street
10. Brunswick Square
11. Public Consultation Information

Additional Information

<http://www.torbay.gov.uk/index/yourservices/transportandstreets/transportpolicy/localtransportboard/ttca.htm>