

**Proposed Decision to be taken by the
Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning
on or after 22 November 2013**

**Proposed Raised Traffic Calming Features
High Street, Alcester**

Recommendation

That the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning agrees that the proposed raised traffic calming features on High Street, Alcester are implemented as advertised.

1.0 Key Issues

- 1.1 High Street, Church Street and Henley Street are C Class roads with a 30mph speed limit throughout. All three roads link on from one another and run through Alcester Town Centre. Through the town there is frontage commercial and residential development on both sides of the carriageway.
- 1.2 Through discussions with the Local Councillor and with the support of the local residents, Planning Committee, Chamber of Trade, Civic Society and the Town Council a scheme was put forward to introduce raised crossing points and speed cushions.
- 1.3 Funding from the 2013 / 14 Delegated Budget has been allocated to the High Street, Alcester scheme.
- 1.4 Proposals to implement proposed raised traffic calming features on High Street, Alcester were advertised in both the Stratford Herald and the Redditch Advertiser during week beginning the 02 September 2013 and week beginning the 09 September 2013. The plan showing the proposals is attached as **Appendix A**.
- 1.5 Seven objections were received to the proposed raised traffic calming features and nine letters of support. This report considers the objections and comments received and recommends how they should be dealt with.

2.0 Objections and Letters of Support

A summary of the support that has been received to date is provided below:

2.1 Comment A: Councillor Mike Gittus

This work is absolutely essential to the residents, visitors and retailers on our High Street in Alcester. Over the last three years WCC has invested heavily in making The High Street in Alcester a better and safer place for all.

Primarily the work described here is to improve road safety for all road users, because I know that slower speeds mean, less severe casualties in both pedestrians and road users. The only effective way of reducing the speed of vehicles on the roadway is by engineering, that's lumps and bumps and chicanes. Making it impossible for vehicles to drive at an inappropriate speed by this method is the only sure way to reduce casualties.

I know that not everybody like the bumps in the road, but they are a necessary part of the scheme and the crossing point raised areas have been kept to the absolute minimum. I am obviously sympathetic towards a driver suggesting that their cars suspension has been damaged by the raised areas, but my response is simple, 'drive at an appropriate slow speed'

Apart from the road safety issue there is also a benefit to the pleasant shopping experience by reducing speeds and the additional opportunity of drivers and passengers absorbing the retail possibilities as they drive by. WCC has been raising the standard of Alcester High Street, engineering and maintenance wise, to enable the opportunity of 'twenty is plenty'. I hope that by receiving the support of my community and fellow elected members that this will become a reality.

In the future I would like to see the High Street attached to the extended engineering scheme already in place on Kinwarton Road, enabling me to promote 20mph for an extended length of highway at little cost, this opportunity is built into the current scheme.

2.2 Comment B: Planning Committee of Alcester Town Council

The Councillors unanimously decided to fully support the plans.

2.3 Comment C: Alcester Chamber of Trade

- The Chamber supports the principle of the High Street Scheme.
- The general reduction of speed on Alcester High Street would be welcomed by the businesses on Alcester High Street.

2.4 Comment D: Town Councillor Eric Payne

I am pleased to support the scheme as I believe it would improve road safety in this area.

2.5 Comment E: Town Councillor Susan Adams

I would like to give my support and think it would go a long way in improving road safety in this area.

2.6 Comment F: Alcester Civic Society

The Civic Society supports the proposals for traffic calming in the High Street, Church Street and Henley Street.

In our opinion reducing the speed of the traffic to 20mph and the various engineering improvements proposed form a substantial first phase towards a one-way traffic system which we feel should be in the longer term given serious consideration.

2.7 Comment G:

As a road safety professional for over 20 years specialising in pedestrian safety, and a member of the Parliamentary Advisory Committee on Transport Safety (PACTS), I wholeheartedly endorse Mike Gittus' campaign to get 20mph speed limits in and around Alcester at relevant sites.

I also totally endorse the plans for the High street/Town Hall. The "Clitheroe Crossings" as originally completed were far more visible than the present replacements, and I believe they need upgrading to be more prominent.

I am aware that there have been some adverse comments and, having read them, I do not believe that any of the negative arguments advanced stand scrutiny.

2.8 Comment H:

We live in Henley St. about 10m northwest of the Town Hall. We are very pleased that something is being done to calm the traffic in this area as the narrowness of the road at the side of the Town Hall and further down Henley St. creates a hazard. We are the only property that has a carriage entrance on the northwest side of Henley St. opposite Meeting Lane and when driving out of this entrance our view towards the town centre is extremely limited by the Town Hall, so we support any measures in this area that will reduce traffic speed.

The following objections were received:

2.9 Objection [1]

The speed cushions and raised crossing points are likely to cause dangerous fatigue damage to safety critical vehicle components (e.g. tyres, springs), even at low speeds.

Response

Research has been carried out to evaluate the impact of road humps on vehicle damage by TRL and Millbrook, which included testing vehicles on speed cushions and road humps and creating computer models of vehicles and their occupants. The tests did not show evidence of any vehicle damage from the humps or significant and permanent changes to the vehicles suspension systems. The report concluded that the levels of discomfort caused by the humps were generally acceptable if they were traversed at an appropriate speed (15-20mph).

2.10 Objection [2]

The raised 'crossing points' are totally unnecessary. They cause confusion, and there have been many near and actual accidents when pedestrians step out in front of vehicles, believing that they have right of way.

Response

The uncertainty between motorists and pedestrians can be a positive, as both vehicles and pedestrians are more aware of each other's presence and act accordingly. There have not been any accidents at any of the existing crossing points in the last 5 years. It is proposed to raise each of these crossing points, which in turn will lower vehicle speeds further and make the crossings more prominent.

2.11 Objection [3]

The crossing opposite St Nicholas Church is unsafe, as its position does not allow pedestrians to see traffic coming up the High Street towards the church, or to allow traffic to see pedestrians waiting or trying to cross.

Response

Moving the existing crossing point to the west (into the junction mouth of Butter Street) was considered, however there were various issues with this proposal. A raised table would have needed to be constructed; meaning the whole width of the carriageway across the junction of Butter Street would need to be raised. This would have been very expensive and caused other issues such as: drainage problems, loss of parking spaces, difference in surface between Butter Street and High Street and even though Butter Street is a quiet road, it isn't advisable to encourage pedestrians to cross at a junction mouth.

Visibility at the existing crossing point was measured before the design stage of the scheme. Visibility from the footway opposite the church looking south down the High Street was measured at 45m, 85%ile speeds at this location will be below 25mph, therefore the absolute minimum visibility should be no lower than 40m.

Also, the scheme has been through an independent Road Safety Audit, where none of the crossing points were raised as a safety issue.

2.12 Objection [4]

I would like to see some mandatory safe crossings for pedestrians on the High Street e.g. a Zebra Crossing.

Response

Proposals for crossings have to be justified and prioritised by reference to evidence such as accident statistics and the evidence does not support this proposal.

2.13 Objection [5]

I feel very strongly that the money allocated to the traffic calming features on High Street would be far more appropriately spent on similar features placed along St Faith's Road.

Response

Councillor Gittus has responded to requests from the local community, and has secured £25000 for this scheme through the Delegated Budget, as outlined in the letters of support received.

2.14 Objection [6]

The speed cushions and raised crossings are ineffectual at reducing speeds to the desired 20mph. Speed cushions only reduce speeds to 30mph near and at cushions, they are even less effective when challenged by more robust larger vehicles.

Response

Research has been carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of speed cushions in relation to reducing vehicle speeds by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL). 85%ile speeds were monitored before and after the speed cushions were constructed at 34 separate sites. The average 85%ile speeds across the various sites was 35.6mph, which decreased to 21.7mph after construction.

2.15 Objection [7]

The speed of traffic in Alcester High Street is rarely above 20mph when pedestrians are around during the daytime because of the parking, existing crossings that already narrow the road width; thus slowing the speed of traffic already, and the regular amount of traffic parked on the "non-parking" side of the street unloading goods to the shops.

Response

There is recorded speed data for the northern section of the scheme (taken over a 10 day period). The recorded 85%ile speeds for the 24 hour period were around 30mph at most times of the day. This indicates that the introduction of the raised features will reduce vehicle speeds by at least 5mph, as suggested by the research carried out in similar locations.

2.16 Objection [8]

The scheme will have an adverse effect on street community activities and become an obstacle course for people crossing the road.

Response

The scheme is an environmental enhancement and has been designed with the retail traders in mind. The project is essential to Councillor Gittus's vision of reinvigorating the High Street and reinstating on-street markets. The Project Manager of WCC's Operation Footfall has been in dialogue with Councillor Gittus and is supportive of the scheme and the idea of future on-street markets.

2.17 **Recommendation**

That the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning agrees that the proposed raised traffic calming features on High Street, Alcester are implemented as advertised. These recommendations can be implemented from within 2013/2014 delegated budget provisions.

3.0 Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 3.1 The aim will be for the High Street, Alcester scheme to be implemented within the 2013/2014 financial year.

4.0 Background papers

1. Objection letters
2. Letters of support

Appendices

Appendix A – Plan No. TR 8903 / 01

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