

North St Residents Consultation: Traffic Calming Options

Meeting Summary Notes: Thursday 27th September 2018

Introduction by PTC

One of the principal objectives of the Petworth Traffic Plan is to achieve average speeds on the approach roads and town centre, inside the 'Gateways', closer to 20 mph and to reduce the incidence of 'speed rogues' and dangerous or inconsiderate driving.

There are two 'concepts' of how to do this:

- 20 mph Limit. This is a legal speed level that requires enforcement.
- 20 mph Zone. A target achieved by physical measures such as signage etc.

There are parts of the town centre where a 20 mph Zone is already a reality due to natural speed control factors such as sharp bends, narrowness of roads and parking etc. Hence, it is the approach roads (especially North St and Angel St initially) that will be the focus of attention for additional traffic calming measures.

The comments and suggestions from tonight's discussion will be used to prioritise a list of traffic calming options for further evaluation. Each option will be assessed for technical viability, regulatory guidelines, resident's opinions, cost, priority etc. The results will be summarised with a recommendation to residents and then full Council later in the year.

The expectations need to be realistic. Some things will not be technically viable; some will not meet regulatory guidelines; some will not have agreement within the town community; some will be too expensive (at present): and, some will have to take lower priority. The Town Council cannot guarantee which action will be taken nor when. This is because some aspects are under its control, but many are not. The Town Council will keep trying to identify viable options that will help calm traffic in the town.

Evidence will be required to improve the chances of WSCC Highways agreeing to a proposal. This is because they use a data driven assessment methodology.

Motorbike noise is a separate issue and it is unlikely that the Traffic Calming measures will have a significant impact on bikers. Polite requests and Police enforcement are therefore the best options.

Residents Comments

The following North St traffic problems and issues were emphasised during the discussion:

- Pedestrians are in danger at narrow pavement pinch-points with vehicles using pavements.
- Not the volume of traffic, but the speed.
- Large wing mirrors overlapping pavement space.
- Excessive speeding & noise from motorbikes – especially on Sundays.

- Cars and vans use Thompson Hospital lane to stop & turn, often abusive to residents.

The following traffic calming options were identified before and during the meeting:

- Speed indicator or slow down indicator. Either actual speed or flashing 'slow down'.
- Speed camera on North St
- Use Sussex Police 'Operation Crackdown'. Investigate residents speed control teams.
- CCTV Camera. Could residents manage this pro-actively?
- Barriers at narrow pavement pinch-points: could be handrail or bollard on pavement.
- Pedestrians crossing sign (flashing?) at Cow Yard.
- Pedestrian crossing at Cow Yard.
- 'Threshold' enhancement, including making the round-about more prominent and creating the effect of a narrowing of the North St entrance.
- Move 'Gateway' further out at Hampers Green, or other measures to slow traffic before 'Threshold'
- Clearer 'Gateway' signs: a variety of suggestions are summarised below
- Clearer 'Threshold' signs: a variety of suggestions are summarised below
- Other signs on North St: suggestions are summarised below
- 20 mph limit
- Chicane at critical point(s)
- Alternate flow using traffic lights
- Speed bumps/strips
- Raised kerb

The investigation of clearer or improved 'Gateway' and 'Threshold' signage will consider:

- Signs for 'slow down', 'elderly & children', 'speed limit'.
- Divert round the town indicator such as "Quickest Route to"
- 'Town Centre Only' indicator to North St at 'Threshold'.
- Don't follow Sat Nav
- Signage to slow before 'Threshold'
- Long banner signs on lamp posts or other eye-catching sign designs
- Medieval Town, narrow streets & pavements.
- Notice to Bikers to be considerate to residents

The issues of traffic noise and pollution were discussed. The available evidence suggests that the most effective method to reduce noise and pollution is to keep traffic moving at a steady speed. It is therefore WSCC Highways policy to prioritise traffic calming measures that help achieve this objective. Measures that could result in 'stop and start' or queuing traffic are therefore not favoured and would require evidence for why an exception should be made.

A comment was received that cars and vans use Thompson Hospital lane to stop and turn, and that drivers are often inconsiderate or abusive to residents (see section below for reporting anti-social drivers). A Private and No Entry sign has been proposed for this lane. PTC will investigate whether this would be the responsibility of the Council or the landowner.

Motorbike Noise & Speeding

This issue is considered to be a special case requiring separate consideration, although it is part of the overall problem of dangerous driving and excessive noise on North St.

The legal framework governing bike noise is the Motorcycle Regulation Acts of 1995 and 1999 plus EC directives. The 'Drive by Noise Limits' are specified at registration (Regulation 57 Schedule 7A) and are 80 to 87dB for the larger bikes. There are exemptions for pre-1983 vehicles. In Service Noise (after 1983) is governed by Schedule 57B which states that it is an offence if noise could be "materially less" if the vehicle were in good order or not altered. Silencers must meet the relevant British Standard (and not have been altered). Altered vehicles or those in poor working order are governed by Regulation 54 which makes it an offence to make 'increased noise'. In use behaviour (revving etc) is governed by Regulation 97 which requires 'reasonable care' to avoid excessive noise.

All this means that making excessive noise is an offence but that it is technically difficult to enforce. The penalty is a fine up to £1000 but there is a Fixed Penalty option of an on the spot £20 fine. The date of this information needs to be confirmed to ensure it is up to date. The Police take the pragmatic view that it is more effective to focus on speed enforcement.

Most of the traffic calming options under consideration are likely to be ineffective for motorbike noise. We are left with Polite requests and Police enforcement. The Polite requests could take the form of signs, internet forum, Market Square meeting or visiting biker meeting places (with a Police liason) to "ask for their assistance".

How to report Dangerous or Anti-Social Incidents

We are all asked to report any non-emergency but dangerous or anti-social driving incident (location, date, nature, registration number or vehicle type etc) to Sussex Police using their online reporting tool 'Operation Crackdown'. This can be accessed via the Sussex Police website. Alternatively phone the 101 number. It would be helpful to also inform the Town Clerk on 01798 344883 or via email to clerk@petworth-tc.gov.uk.

Next Stage & Timing

The next step is for the Council to obtain more information on each option and prepare a draft recommendation. This will be sent to residents and a further consultation arranged to finalise a proposal to WSCC Highways. The aim will be to complete this work in the next few months. However, the Council also plan to invite Angel St residents to a similar meeting and to make an integrated proposal for North St and Angel St (and other approach roads). Hence, the precise timing cannot be guaranteed at present.

Further Information

Additional documents providing further details of the Petworth Traffic Calming Plan are available to view or download from the Town Council website. These include an overview of the Traffic Plan and an update of the Consultation Meeting presentation.