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**Meeting:** Delegated Decisions by the Executive Member for Community Services on Traffic Regulation Orders

**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> July 2015

**Subject:** Downs Road Dunstable, Proposal to Amend Traffic Management

**Report of:** Paul Cook, Assistant Director Highways and Transport

**Summary:** This report updates the Executive Member on progress made in reviewing the traffic management arrangements in the Downs Road area.

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**Public/Exempt:** Public

**Wards Affected:** Dunstable Manshead

**Function of:** Council

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

This proposal supports the following council priorities:

- Better infrastructure – improved roads, broadband reach and transport
- Value for money
- Enhancing Central Bedfordshire

### **Financial:**

The cost of carrying out the survey discussed in this report is over £4,000. There is currently no budget allocated to implement measures arising from this report.

### **Legal:**

None from this report

### **Risk Management:**

None from this report

### **Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

None from this report

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

None from this report

**Community Safety:**

None from this report

**Sustainability:**

None from this report

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- 1 That the results of the survey be noted**
- 2 That the Executive Member makes a decision *either***
  - a. To review the traffic management of the Downs Road area within the context of the package of measures required to incorporate the detrunking of the A5 in Dunstable in 2017. *or***
  - b. To consult on a revocation of the current one-way system in Downs Road *or***
  - c. To wait until 2017 to fully review the scheme, but to remove the priority one-way narrowing on Great Northern Road close to the A5 now.**

**Background Information**

1. On 13<sup>th</sup> October 2014 the Executive Member for Community Services considered a petition from Dunstable residents seeking to revoke a traffic regulation order that had set up a one-way system in Downs Road.
2. Having considered the petition, the Executive Member decided the following:

“That the lead petitioner be informed that the contents of the petition be noted but that no further works will be undertaken ahead of further traffic surveys and consultations to determine the impact of the one-way street and wider traffic issues including the detrunking of the A5.”
3. Following the meeting, a survey was commissioned to look at traffic counts into and out of Downs Road and Park Road to see if any unexpected traffic movements were taking place. This report updates the Executive Member on the results of this survey.

**Survey methodology**

4. Because the intention of collecting the data was simply to see if any unexpected changes had taken place, a large scale survey was not considered necessary. National Data Collection (NDC) were commissioned to look at numbers of vehicles and at the origins and exit

points of the vehicles using electronic number plate matching techniques (ANPR) which allow an understanding of the distribution of moving vehicles within the area.

5. The survey was carried out on Wednesday 6th May 2015, adopting the survey times of 0700 – 0900 to observe morning peak movements and 1600-1800 for evening peak movements. Seven site locations were used:
  - A5 High Street/Great Northern Road
  - Great Northern Road/Park Road
  - Park Road/Grove Road
  - Park Road/Borough Road
  - High Street/Half Moon Lane
  - Borough Road/Blows Road
  - Great Northern Road/Downs Road
6. Excel spreadsheets were produced by NDC. Results of matching number plates between locations were provided in the form matrices. Detailed manual checks of the data were carried out to ensure its accuracy.
7. The survey was carried out on a typical midweek day. It does not, therefore, show the results of traffic movements on the roads on days where a major incident has occurred. On such days, traffic counts would likely be much higher.

### **Summary of the survey results**

8. Details of movements from the survey are given at Appendix A to this report. In summary, the survey shows the following:
  - In total 214 vehicles used Park Road in the morning peak (7am to 9am).
  - For the afternoon peak (4pm to 6pm) 290 vehicles used Park Road.
  - The majority of traffic (574 out of 788 vehicles) coming south down the Great Northern Road in the morning peak is probably doing so to avoid the junction of the A5 with Church Street. A minority of this traffic (just over 200) enters the residential area (mostly Park Road or, via the High Street, Borough Road/Blows Road)
  - In the evening, the figure is even higher: 841 out of 1,148 vehicles are probably using the Great Northern Road to avoid the A5-Church Street junction. A minority (307) enter the residential area
9. A survey was carried out on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2011, before any one-way schemes were in place using similar methodology to the 2015 survey. The times when some of the data was collected are different and less comprehensive than those from the current survey, so direct comparisons are difficult, but a summary would be as follows:-

- There has been an increase in traffic in Park Road since the one-way scheme has been introduced. Prior to this, in the period from 8am-9am, 12 vehicles were observed entering Park Road eastbound compared to 168 vehicles in 2015.
  - There has been a corresponding decrease in traffic entering Downs Road between 8am and 9am eastbound from 137 down to zero. Thus total traffic using the two roads heading east in the morning has increased by 12%. This increase is likely to be a natural growth in traffic rather than new traffic being attracted to the area, but this cannot be proved.
10. Finally, and separate from the survey, an analysis of accidents in the area was undertaken. This showed that in the 2 years prior to August 2013 there were two injury collisions. In the period since August 2013 there have been two further collisions, one at each of the same junctions as previously. It can be seen therefore that there is not a significant injury collision history in the area overall nor has the rate of occurrence of collisions changed.
11. The main conclusions from the survey are as follows:
- The redistribution of traffic caused by the setting up of the one-way system in Downs Road is within predicted parameters for traffic in the area. As such, the new survey shows that nothing unexpected has happened since the introduction of the one-way system.
  - Traffic which previously entered Downs Road from the east is now using Park Road in the morning peak
  - A great deal of the traffic using Great Northern Road is probably doing so to avoid the junction of Church Street with the A5
  - There has been no change to the number of accidents in the area

### **Next Steps**

12. Two major roads are now being built in the area: the A5-M1 link and the Woodside Link. These are predicted to have a major impact on the amount of traffic in Dunstable as follows:-
- A 25% reduction in the number of vehicles using the A5 High Street in the morning peak
  - A 16% reduction in traffic on north-south parallel roads, such as the Great Northern Road, and
  - A 20% reduction in HGVs accessing the town centre
13. Building these two roads also makes it possible to detrunk the A5 in Dunstable. Consultation on this detrunking is expected to start in mid 2016 so as to enable any solutions to be delivered as quickly as possible after the Woodside Link and the A5-M1 link have been completed, scheduled for early 2017.

14. The changes brought about by these two schemes will have an impact on traffic in Great Northern Road. At present, the survey indicates that it is likely that the majority of traffic using Great Northern Road is doing so to avoid the A5-Church Street junction. By reducing traffic at this junction, traffic coming into the Downs Road-Park Road area will therefore be significantly reduced.
15. This increase in road capacity on the A5 will therefore make it possible to design more effective traffic management measures to encourage traffic to use the A5 rather than travelling along adjoining roads.
16. At the time of the meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2014, the Executive Member for Community Services felt that the appropriate time to further review traffic management measures in the Downs Road area would be once the A5-M1 link and the Woodside Link had been completed.
17. However, since then, as the latest survey shows, traffic movements in the Downs Road area have not changed significantly. This is still the subject of discontent for many people. At the time the original decision was made, the majority of people consulted – around 57% (375 people) – were against making any change and even within Downs Road, where the majority wanted a change, less than half of Downs Road residents responding (44% or 49 people) gave the current solution as their preferred choice. The Executive Member for Community Services may, therefore, wish to review the decision to wait until the A5 has been detrunked before taking any action and instead to agree to the views of the petitioners that the traffic regulation order putting in place a one-way system be revoked.
18. In doing so the Executive Member may wish to take into account timescales for any changes to be implemented. Should a decision be made to consult on the removal of the one-way scheme now, this consultation is likely to generate objections which will need to be considered. This will take a minimum of 6 months. This is likely to mean that any revised scheme would be being put in place at around the same time as consultation on the A5 changes was starting which is anticipated to be in mid 2016.
19. An alternative would be to focus on improving vehicle flows on the Great Northern Road while waiting for the consultation on the A5 for a more fundamental review of traffic management in the area. The majority of the traffic is on the Great Northern Road and one piece of infrastructure potentially impeding this flow is the priority one-way working close to the A5. This could be removed quickly and without consultation. The effect may be to reduce congestion on Great Northern Road. It may be, however, that doing so has consequences which would need to be examined.