

## Central Bedfordshire Council

### SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 17 March 2016

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#### Downs Road One-Way Scheme - Report on Consultation

Report of Cllr Brian Spurr, Executive Member for Sustainable Communities  
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#### Purpose of this report

1. To consider objections and other representations on the proposed removal of the existing one-way traffic order on Downs Road, Dunstable.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to comment, consider and provide recommendations to the Executive Member for Community Services with regard to the proposal to remove the one-way scheme in Downs Road, taking into account the representations received. Options would include:

1. Retain the existing one-way traffic order for Downs Road, Dunstable
2. Approve the removal of the existing one-way traffic order on Downs Road, Dunstable
3. Approve the removal of the existing one-way traffic order on Downs Road but delay its implementation until further measures related to the de-trunking of the A5 have been considered.
4. Defer any decision until after the de-trunking of the A5 and a full traffic assessment has been undertaken.

#### Background

2. In August 2013, a one-way traffic order was introduced prohibiting traffic in Downs Road from travelling eastwards from Great Northern Road to Allen Close. The restriction was implemented in response to local concerns about traffic using Downs Road to avoid congestion on the A5 High Street South. The one-way working was intended to

balance traffic movements in the area and so reduce the burden on Downs Road.

3. As a result of wider concerns expressed by residents, in 2015 the Council undertook a traffic survey looking at the effects of the introduction of the one-way system in Downs Road. The survey showed that traffic had dropped in Downs Road, but had increased in Park Road. Overall, in terms of movements, there had been a 12% increase in traffic since the scheme was introduced in 2013, but this increase is likely to be a natural growth in traffic rather than as a result of the scheme. Further research carried out at the same time looked at the safety of the scheme. The research showed that there is not a significant injury collision history in the area overall and that the rate of occurrence of recorded collisions has not changed since the scheme has been introduced.
4. The results of this survey were reported to the Executive Member for Community Services at a meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2015. At this meeting, a decision was taken to carry out preliminary consultation restricted to the streets most directly affected by the scheme, on the removal of the one-way system in Downs Road. The survey showed that the majority of respondents in Downs Road and Blows Road wanted to see the scheme retained, but the majority of respondents from neighbouring roads wanted to see it removed. Overall, from around 400 households the council distributed the questionnaire to, we received 165 replies, of which 47 wished to retain the scheme and 118 wanted to remove it.
5. This preliminary consultation was reported to The Executive Member for Community Services at a meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2015 at which the Executive Member agreed the principle of the removal of the one way system in Downs Road and authorised Officers formally to consult on the removal of the Traffic Regulation Order.
6. This report gives the results of this formal consultation and seeks the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as to what action should be undertaken.

### **Publication of Proposals**

7. As required by legislation, the council published statutory notices on 21 January 2016. The notices appeared in the Luton and Dunstable Herald and Post and on the Council's website while copies were posted on-street. Consultations were carried out with the emergency services and other statutory bodies, Dunstable Town Council and relevant Ward Members. Residents living in the Downs Road area between Great Northern Road and Hillside Road were individually consulted by letter. The deadline for objections was 19 February 2016.

## Public Response

8. A total of 71 representations were received, comprising 26 objections to the removal of the one-way traffic order, 36 supporting its removal and 9 other representations. A petition signed by over 387 people in support of the removal of the one-way system has also been submitted to the Council. All responses have been included as an Appendix accessible via an electronic link.
  
9. The main points raised by those objecting to the removal of the one-way traffic order are as follows:-
  - (i) Downs Road was not designed to cater for the large volumes of traffic that will use it if two-way traffic is restored.
  - (ii) Prior to the restriction being implemented there were numerous minor incidents, which have now been reduced.
  - (iii) The one-way system has resulted in a cleaner and safer environment that is more pleasant for pedestrians.
  - (iv) The alternative routes used to circumvent the one-way system result in only very short distance diversions.
  - (v) The current system allows for simpler and safer manoeuvres for residents at the road junction when accessing/egressing private driveways.
  - (vi) The excessive traffic and associated traffic issues experienced in Downs Road will be worse than before due to rises in traffic levels and consequential increased congestion.
  - (vii) Cyclists and pedestrians using Downs Road will be exposed to increased hazards.
  - (viii) Any decisions should be deferred until after the de-trunking of the A5 and a full traffic assessment has been undertaken.
  
10. The main points raised by those supporting to the removal of the one-way traffic order are as follows:-
  - (i) The survey data proves that the restriction has not reduced overall traffic in the area, has not shared it in an equitable manner and has inconvenienced residents.
  - (ii) The present arrangement creates congestion in Great Northern Road and other streets.
  - (iii) The one-way system has resulted in diversions and longer journeys times for those living within the area.
  - (iv) The one-way system forces drivers to use unsuitable roads, such as Park Road, and undertake potentially hazardous manoeuvres.
  - (v) The removal of two way traffic has resulted in higher vehicle speeds in Downs Road.
  - (vi) The majority of residents in the area were opposed to the introduction of the restriction, so it should never have been implemented.

(vii) Traffic calming measures were one of the options previously put forward to dissuade through traffic and should be considered as part of the proposed amendments.

11. Some who responded neither support nor oppose the removal, but believe that it should be delayed until the 2017 review has been undertaken.

### **Officers' Response**

12. Traffic data carried out before the introduction of the one-way system showed that Downs Road was one of the more heavily trafficked residential roads in this area and was used by some drivers to avoid congestion on other roads. As a result, residents of that road campaigned for many years for traffic management measures to reduce the volume of traffic using Downs Road. This led to the introduction of the one-way system in Downs Road in 2013.
13. The one-way traffic spread the burden of traffic across the area by forcing traffic heading generally south-eastwards to use alternatives to Downs Road. In that respect the restriction has been successful. However, residents living on those alternative routes have seen an increase in traffic outside their homes and their general view is that Downs Road is more able to cope with the traffic than their roads.
14. The roads involved did not have a poor collision history before the one-way was introduced and that is still the case. The roads are residential streets that mainly carry local traffic, so any traffic restrictions do not have a significant impact on the efficient operation of the highway network. Any overall environmental impact, either positive or negative, is negligible, although it is acknowledged that the one-way working has brought about an amenity benefit for those living in Downs Road, but has had a counter effect in other roads.

### **Options for consideration**

15. Committee could recommend to the Executive Member for Community Services one of the following four options:-
- (i) Retain the one-way system. Should this recommendation be accepted no further action would be undertaken.
  - (ii) Remove the one-way system. If the Executive Member chooses to accept this recommendation, the system will be removed some time this summer.
  - (iii) Remove the one-way system but delay its implementation until further measures related to the de-trunking of the A5 have been considered in 2017.
  - (iv) Defer any decision until after the de-trunking of the A5 and a full traffic assessment has been undertaken in 2017 of this area and the surrounding quadrant.

### **Reason/s for decision**

16. Actions proposed on the issue of traffic in Downs Road have been the subject of much discussion and concern for many years. The view of Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is therefore sought on what should be done.

### **Council Priorities**

17. Improving the flow of traffic in Dunstable would enhance Central Bedfordshire, making the area more attractive and create stronger communities.

### **Corporate Implications**

#### **Legal**

18. There have been challenges to traffic orders in the past, both on decisions taken and that the Council has failed to follow the correct procedures. More specifically, the Local Authorities Traffic Orders Procedure Regulations contains a provision that allows a person to challenge the validity of an order. The person must apply to the High Court within 6 weeks of the order being made and the challenge must be on procedural grounds. On this occasion officers can confirm that the correct procedures have been complied with.

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

19. There is a cost associated with the removal of traffic regulation orders, such as one-way systems. In this case, the likely cost of removal will be in the region of £10,000. If recommendation 1 is accepted, there are no cost implications. If recommendations 3 or 4 are approved, the cost will be met from within the A5 de-trunking capital scheme. If recommendation 2 is approved, the cost would be met from an existing highways budget yet to be identified.

### **Equalities Implications**

20. None of the suggested options unfairly discriminate against any particular group. Vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people are not affected by the existing one-way traffic order, so the proposal will have no impact on them.

### **Implications for Work Programming**

21. None

## **Conclusion and next Steps**

22. The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the feedback received on the proposal to remove the existing one-way traffic order in Downs Road. The public response received is entirely as expected, i.e. those living in roads likely to see an increase in traffic are opposed and those who are expected to benefit support the proposal.
23. If a decision is taken to remove the one-way system, it will be necessary to arrange for the signs, road markings and any other street furniture associated with the restriction to be removed. Statutory consultation on this has now been carried out, but a legal order will need to be made, statutory notice informing that the order has been made will need to be published and objectors notified of the Council's decision.

## **Appendices**

Appendix1 details the results of the statutory consultation on the removal of the one-way system in Downs Road.

## **Background Papers**

24. None.