

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**TUESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2015 AT 10.00AM**

**PETITION TO REMOVE THE VICARAGE ROAD ONE WAY TRIAL, WATFORD**

*Report of the Chief Executive and Director of Environment*

Author: Ian Thompson, Highway Locality Manager  
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Executive Member: Terry Douris, Highways

Local Member: Nigel Bell (Vicarage Holywell)

**1 Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To advise County Council of the receipt of a petition relating to the one-way trial operation in Vicarage Road, between Rose Gardens and just south of the railway bridge.

**2 Summary**

- 2.1 Notice of intention to present a petition containing 1,000 or more signatures has been received pursuant to the County Council's Petition Scheme. The petition states:-

*"Stop Vicarage Road Chaos*

*Residents in and around Watford have suffered two days horrific traffic as a one way system was introduced on the weekend (3/10/15).*

*The new one way system has caused buses to run an hour late; caused journeys to become 5 times as long as they would normally be.*

*This is the main access point to the main hospital that serves all of South West Hertfordshire. Being stuck in that traffic with a sick relative/loved one would be horrific.*

*Herts County Council - stop this trial now. Rethink the scheme and try again. This will only be worse once the tube station opens!"*

- 2.2 The County Council's Petition Scheme provides that officers will prepare a report for Members setting out the background and other relevant information of which they are aware relating to the subject matter of the petition but will not give a recommendation as to how the petition should be dealt with.

### **3. Procedure**

- 3.1 The petition which is the subject of this report has been received in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme (Annex 22 to the Constitution).
- 3.2 The deadline for receipt of motions from Members in respect of this report under Standing Order 9(3) is noon on Thursday, 5 November 2015.
- 3.3 Paragraph 44 of the Petition Scheme provides that the Petition Organiser will be given three minutes maximum to present the petition and will not otherwise be allowed to speak at the meeting. There is then a short debate by Council.
- 3.4 Paragraph 47 of the Petition Scheme states:-

*The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at the meeting. They may decide to take the action the petition requests or not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate. Where the issue is one on which the Council executive are required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. If the Council do not decide to deal with the petition in some other way, it will (at the discretion of the Chairman) be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the appropriate Cabinet Panel or to officers for consideration and report to the local member and Group Spokesmen.*

### **4. Background and Other Relevant Information**

- 4.1 This report sets out the work that has taken place to date in developing a scheme to improve pedestrian and cycle facilities in Vicarage Road between Stripling Way and Rose Gardens, Watford.
- 4.2 A new toucan crossing (signalised crossing for pedestrian and cyclists) has been proposed in Vicarage Road outside Laurance Haines School. The aim of the scheme is to improve safe and sustainable journeys to the school, and to and from Watford Vicarage Road station when it opens.
- 4.3 The report summarises feasibility work carried out as well as two consultation exercises, their results and actions taken in light of the consultation.
- 4.4 A summary is also provided on initial observations relating to the impact of the trial.
- 4.5 Feasibility Work:
  - 4.5.1 In August 2012 feasibility work was completed to consider enhancements for improving safe and sustainable journeys in Vicarage Road, Watford, between Hagden Lane and Scammell Way.

- 4.5.2 The objectives were to enhance facilities in the vicinity for children accessing Laurance Haines School and for future users of Watford Vicarage Road station. The station will be constructed as part of the extension to the Metropolitan London Underground line to Watford Junction.
- 4.5.3 The study identified that a toucan crossing (signalised crossing for pedestrians and cyclists) could only be implemented on the desire line outside of the school if the shuttle working lights across the bridge were removed. This was because the crossing location and shuttle working lights would be too close together to operate safely. Therefore, if the toucan crossing is to be installed, the conflict over the bridge needs to be removed by making traffic one-way on Vicarage Road.
- 4.5.4 Regular updates have been provided in the member *On the Move* newsletters throughout the development of the scheme.
- 4.6 Public Consultation – Stage 1 (August / September 2014)
- 4.6.1 Design work on the scheme subsequently moved forward with a public consultation exercise taking place in August 2014. This showed a toucan crossing outside the school and northbound one-way operation between Scammell Way and Hagden Lane. This consultation took the form of a letter drop to approximately 1,400 properties in the vicinity. Concerns were expressed that the consultation period should be extended.
- 4.6.2 The Executive Member and Local Member asked officers to extend the consultation period and for officers to be available locally to discuss the proposed scheme. A press release issued in early September 2015 confirmed that the consultation exercise would be extended until 19 September 2015. It also stated that drawings would be available to view at the Watford Cycle Hub, Holywell Community Centre between 8 and 19 September 2015. Officers were also in attendance on 18 September 2015 in the afternoon and evening.
- 4.6.3 143 responses were received to the consultation. This included 95 responses in the form of a petition from Rose Gardens, who were against the scheme due to increased journey times in reaching their residences from the hospital direction. A further 22 responses against the scheme were received, based on concerns around congestion on the surrounding network. 22 responses supporting the scheme were received, and 4 partially supporting the scheme were submitted.
- 4.6.4 On considering the results of the consultation, an amendment was made to shorten the extent of proposed one-way operation. This entailed relocating the northern start point of the one way from Hagden Lane to Rose Gardens. The southern start point was also relocated from Scammell Way to just south of the railway bridge. This allowed residents in Rose Gardens and Stripling Way two-way access via Hagden Lane and Scammell Way respectively.

#### 4.7 Public Consultation - Stage 2 (May 2015)

- 4.7.1 This revised proposal required a legal order to progress to construction, which required a further consultation process. This included adverts being placed on lamp columns in Vicarage Road, complemented by a press release issued in early April 2015 which stated that the legal order consultation would take place in May 2015.
- 4.7.2 Four objections were received during the consultation on the legal order. These cited congestion on the wider West Watford road network.
- 4.7.4 The objections and results of the consultation were considered with the Executive Member and Local Member. Noting the concerns expressed, the Executive Member asked officers to consider a one-way trial with the collection of data before and during a trial. This would assist in assessing the impact on the local road network before a decision was made on whether to implement the arrangements permanently and install the toucan crossing by the school.
- 4.7.5 A press release was issued in early July to this effect outlining that the trial would take place starting in October 2015. This was subsequently followed by a further release in September 2015 confirming that the trial would commence on 5 October with works taking place on 3 and 4 October to provide the necessary infrastructure for the trial to commence. The release also confirmed that the trial would last until February 2016, and that data would be collected before and during the trial. The trial length was set at four months, so as to provide time for traffic levels to settle and a robust evidence base to be collected. A letter summarising the above was also distributed in September to around 1,400 properties.

### **5 The One Way Trial**

- 5.1 Significant delays were experienced in the first few days of the trial, with extended journey times being reported, particularly along Hagden Lane and Tolpits Lane.
- 5.2 Local Watford Members expressed their concerns at the Highways Liaison Meeting that took place on the evening of Wednesday 7 October 2015 and requested that the trial be terminated immediately. It was confirmed at the meeting that when the trial is completed it would be removed and returned to two-way operation. The data collected would then be assessed and a recommendation made on the permanent scheme.
- 5.3 Early on-site observations during the trial noted that alterations could be made to the traffic signals at the junction of Tolpits Lane and Croxley View by the shops. Alterations were made at the signalised junction during the first week of the trial to assist in moving southbound traffic along Tolpits Lane. Initial observations suggest that this has assisted traffic movement.

- 5.4 At the end of the first week of the trial, additional signage was erected in Vicarage Road, Hagden Lane and Tolpits Lane to indicate the alternative route.
- 5.5 A Traffic Signals engineer was on site between 4pm and 8pm on Saturday 17 October 2015, covering the period before, during and after Watford's home game with Arsenal. No issues were apparent or reported above what would normally be expected on a home match day.
- 5.6 Observations from the second week of the trial onwards suggest that traffic conditions have settled since the start of the trial on 5 October. As already mentioned, data will be collected to assist in fully analysing the impact of the trial.
- 5.7 The Executive Member supported the continuation of the trial, on the basis of a regular review.
- 5.8 It has been possible to gather sufficient information to enable the trial to be concluded earlier than publicised. Officers, with the agreement of the Executive Member, are planning for the removal of the trial. The road will be returned to two way operation on Monday, 16 November 2015. An assessment will then take place with the data collected to consider the future of one way operation and provision of a toucan crossing.

## **6 The Petition**

- 6.1 The petition subject of this report started during the first week of the trial and requests that the trial be stopped and the scheme re-thought because of the traffic impacts experienced, implications on journey times and access to the hospital.

## **7 Financial Implications**

- 7.1 The scheme is managed within the County Councils current Integrated Works Programme.

### *Background Information*

County Council Petition Scheme

<http://www.hertsdirect.org/docs/pdf/a/consann22pet20131219.pdf>