

SWALE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Meeting Date	Monday 7 th March 2016
Report Title	Formal Objections – Traffic Regulation Orders for Proposed Sittingbourne Market Re-location
Cabinet Member	Cllr David Simmons
SMT Lead	Dave Thomas
Head of Service	Dave Thomas
Lead Officers	Mike Knowles (SBC)
Classification	Open

Recommendations	Members are asked to note the contents of this report and consider formal objections to the Traffic Regulation Orders, and recommend that the proposed Traffic Regulation Orders be progressed.
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1. Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of formal objections received in relation to the recently advertised Traffic Regulation Orders to accommodate the proposed re-location of the Sittingbourne Market into the High Street.

2. Background

- 2.1 A copy of the Notice of Intention for these Traffic Regulation Orders can be found in Annex A. The proposals consist of amending the current times of the Saturday road closure in the High Street, between the junctions of Station Street and Bell Road, adding a Friday road closure between the junctions of Station Street and Central Avenue, reversing the flow of traffic in Central Avenue between the mini-roundabout and the High Street junction, and amending some of the existing parking restrictions in the High Street.

3. Issue for Decision

- 3.1 Prior to the drafting of the Traffic Regulation Orders, the proposed changes to the High Street road closure and reversal of traffic flow in the lower section of Central Avenue were discussed with Bus Operators at the Swale Quality Bus Partnership Meetings. Following some concerns raised, a separate meeting took place with Bus Operators on 29th September 2015, to discuss in detail the proposals and the issues raised.

- 3.2 It was originally suggested that to accommodate the proposed closures, the traffic flow in the lower section of Central Avenue could be reversed, to allow buses to continue to serve the lower section of the High Street at the existing bus stop outside St Michael's Church. In addition to this, it was proposed to install a new bus stop in the lay-by at the bottom of Central Avenue to replace the bus stop further up the High Street between the junctions of Central Avenue and Station Street.
- 3.3 However, at the meeting on 29th September, the Bus Operators advised that they would prefer to run a consistent route for all days of the week, as producing a different timetable for some days would create confusion with their passengers. There was also a reluctance to run buses up and down Park Road due to vehicle movements in and out of parking bays and to and from the entrance to the public car park off of Avenue of Remembrance.
- 3.4 The Operators therefore stated that rather than running buses through the High Street as they currently do, they felt serving the rear of The Forum would work better. They added that the proposed changes should also include improved signing to direct pedestrians from the High Street to the bus stop, and provision of new bus stops in St Michael's Road to line up with pedestrian access routes through to the High Street.
- 3.5 The proposed Traffic Regulation Orders were amended to take these proposals into account, and formally advertised on site and in local newspapers. A total of 6 formal objections were received, and a copy of these objections can be found in Annex B.
- 3.6 Objections have been received from Swale Seniors Forum, who state that no provision has been made for appropriate boarding points or shelters for users. Objections have also been received stating that the bus stop at the rear of The Forum is totally inadequate, especially when several buses arrive at one time, and that the proposals will result in shoppers having to carry several bags across two main roads to access the St Michael's Road stop. Comments have also been received that removing the bus stops in the High Street will make life difficult for elderly residents who would need to carry shopping from the lower end of the High Street up to the Forum bus stop.
- 3.7 The Arriva Bus Company has formally objected to the proposed High Street closure as they would need to withdraw all vehicles out of the High Street. They state that the alternate route is not suitable for local buses, and that passengers will need to walk further to access local bus services, some of which have mobility issues. They state that this will have a detrimental impact on these passengers.
- 3.8 The Chalkwell Bus Company has submitted a comprehensive formal objection to the proposals, stating that over the years they have developed local and rural routes for the Sittingbourne area and that the proposals to close the High Street will have a negative impact on patronage and revenue, putting the viability and sustainability of some of these routes at risk. They also make comments around the unsuitability of the alternative route via Central Avenue, and insist that bus services should continue in the High Street. They also make many other comments including reduction in High Street footfall, increased mileage, limited covered waiting areas for

passengers, lack of clearly defined footpaths to and from The Forum to High Street and increased costs which they feel the Borough Council would need to meet.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and consider formal objections to the Traffic Regulation Orders, and recommend that the proposed Traffic Regulation Orders be progressed.

5. Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Embracing Localism Open for Business Healthy Environment
Financial, Resource and Property	Costs associated with Traffic Regulation Order, and necessary lining and signing. Costs associated with Traffic Sign Strategy, Enforcement Policy, Feasibility and Safety Audit, possible costs associated with Bus Route changes, Letter of Agreement and appointment of highway contractor(s). The work will be funded through the Regeneration Fund.
Legal and Statutory	Traffic Regulation Orders to be sealed by Kent County Council.
Crime and Disorder	None.
Sustainability	The initiative supports the economic vitality of the area and the town centre in particular and provides an opportunity to demonstrate localism in action through the contract award (Sittingbourne Market Operative)
Health and Wellbeing	An enhanced and improved market offer with greater visibility will promote and support healthier lifestyles through partnership working.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The technical work which has yet to be undertaken will consider these issues.
Equality and Diversity	The consultation undertaken to date indicates that there will be greater 'buy-in', support and project sustainability moving forward

6. Appendices

- 6.1 Annex A – Copy of Traffic Regulation Orders Notice of Intention
Annex B – Copy of Formal Objections Received

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None