ALFRISTON PARISH COUNCIL

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**TRAFFIC LIGHT PROPOSAL UPDATE MEETING – 11TH AUGUST 2017**

**Present:**

James Vaks [JV] [East Sussex Highways]

Andrew Keer [AK] [ East Sussex County Council]

Cllr Nick Beechey [NB] [Alfriston Parish Council]

Cllr Jen Dumelow [JD] [Alfriston Parish Council

Cllr Stephen Shing [SS] [East Sussex County Council]

Victoria Rutt [VR] [Alfriston Parish Council]

**Apologies:**

Cllr Keith Halliday [Alfriston Parish Council]

**Meeting commenced at 14:00**

JV opened the meeting by apologising on behalf of the team for Alfriston Parish Council [APC] not being updated on the project and receiving no communication over the last few months. This meeting has been arranged off the back of the recent Strengthening Local Relationship meeting that Ian Johnson attended and read out an update report from JV. The idea of the meeting today is to update on where they are in the project and the next steps.

JV informed attendees that he works for East Sussex Highways [ESH] and East Sussex County Council [ESCC] have outsourced the design work of this project to his team. He now works under AK on this project. Both JV and AK are aware that this is a very sensitive project with involvement from lots of different parties. AK is the transport planning manager and is working closely with JV on this project. They want to ensure that they keep everyone informed on what is going on.

JV picked up this project in November 2016 and his remit was set by the Lead Member and was told to develop the scheme. Once the design has been developed it will go to the Lead Member with costings and RTOs required for a decision, and then construction [if approved].

He stated that the High St could be separated into 3 sections. NB suggested that the issue of traffic in the village was in fact village wide and it may be unhelpful to think of ‘sections’ as there are knock on effects the length of the village.

JV sent out a letter [relating to access requirements and cellars] to residents in the High St in February 2017 and is still reviewing the feedback from that. NB mentioned that no cellars had been surveyed following the consultation? JV confirmed that they need to complete the first level of design work to see whether the scheme might work and if so what work would need to be completed before engaging the expense of surveys. They are equally mindful that building the scheme will likely involve significant disruption to the village.

JV confirmed that video cameras went up in the village last week to record the traffic and to gather additional data in order to do further modelling as they need to see how traffic flows through the village. NB noted firstly that initially the cameras covered only Weavers Lane corner and the High St but not the Square and that this weekend coverage extended to the Square but not apparently the junction with North St. NB informed JV and AK that on Sunday [6th August] he asked for Alfriston Emergency Group to put cones out on the single yellow line outside the Star Inn in order to see if traffic flows better when there are no obstructions on that part of the High Street.

NB asked how the footage from the cameras was going to be presented to the design team - was there going to be a written synopsis for instance? The footage will all be reviewed and a report drawn up detailing the ‘incidents’ that were recorded.

NB stated that if they are to put up cameras again please could they inform APC beforehand so they are prepared for questions from residents and if any cameras face any houses to inform the occupants what the camera is doing as some residents raised concerns as the cameras were pointing in the direction of their living rooms.

NB asked whether they were going to trial anything in the real world or whether all modelling was going to be done on computers? JV stated that there are limitations in what you can achieve by using temporary lights. NB understood that but feels that it would be a sensible route to go down before spending all this money on something that has not been tested on ‘humans’.

It was questioned that if this project goes ahead, traffic signals are installed and it does not improve anything and or the situation is made worse as a result – will the traffic lights be removed? AK could not say what would happen but he confirmed they are doing all that they can to ensure the correct decision is made for Alfriston and covering every scenario. They would like to avoid that outcome, but as seen recently at Cophall Farm roundabout, it could happen.

NB asked whether equestrian movement had been considered as there are stables and grazing at both ends of the village, as well as riders using the South Down’s Way. Alfriston has a number of horses being led or ridden through the High St every day and the question was posed as to what would happen if a horse decides to stop right in the middle of the traffic light area. Would the other light stop traffic ensuring no one drives into horse and rider, causing a tragic accident? JV confirmed the lights would not recognise a horse stopping in the traffic light zone and would not stop the traffic but it is a scenario they will include in their modelling. The concern was raised that a driver travelling on a green light at 20 mph believing that the road ahead was theirs and that it would be clear of all oncoming traffic would be at significant risk of colliding with a horse and rider if obscured by the bend in the road.

JV went back to updating that he is reviewing the information that was received following the consultation. NB asked what evidential basis was being used to justify the proposed scheme. JV answered that ‘for consistency’ they were using the police accident records. It was raised that these records related only to one incident 7 years ago when a gentleman was hit by a wing mirror causing a small bruise. JV confirmed that the data is from Sussex Police, SAFE and letters from residents. AK states that the letter from residents are compelling evidence and show that something needs to be done in the Village as there is a record of ‘near misses’. Cllr’s NB and JD urged caution when proceeding on the basis of uncorroborated reports and ‘near misses’ as the latter was something open to wide interpretation. JV and AK were asked if they could detail what damage had been caused to buildings. There and then they could not.

It was raised that there is a significant traffic problem in North St, with undue speed, strikes on buildings and vehicles mounting the pavement in a dangerous fashion. However the focus appears to be on the narrow section of the High St. AK said he was not aware of the extent of under reporting re North Street. It was suggested that this highlighted different responses to similar problems.

SS updated that one resident has said to him that the ‘give way’ sign coming from Deans Place is in the wrong position and that the lines on the road had faded. It was asked by the same resident why can’t there be a give way junction put in further south on that stretch of road. JV stated that this has been considered but could not work for 2 reasons; 1 being that the road ideally should be 5.5m wide [based on the criteria required where temporary road works are taking place] in order for 2 cars to pass sufficiently, however this section of road, outside Moonrakers, is less than 5.5m. The other reason is there needs to be direct visibility, which there is not.

It was asked why a convex mirror could not be used to improve forward visibility at this point in the High St. Amey’s safety auditor suggested using such a mirror in order to reduce the danger of the partially bling left turn into North St should the Market Square be a one way gyratory. The question was posed that surely JV and AK considered Amey were well respected highways engineers and their safety auditors similarly so, given ESCC had instructed them to draw up this scheme and given they were proceeding with the scheme Amey had produced.

Was a mirror not therefore a proper piece of highway equipment? JV said he did not feel a mirror was appropriate and it would not be something he would have put forward but he agreed that he would look into this option as part of his side review of the project.

NB respectfully stated that ESCC do not seem to have done anything physically to ameliorate the traffic issue in Alfriston in the last 10 years save put up some bollards and place a sign at the Willows car park stating the road was not suitable for coaches. He asked why no 20mph restriction had been put in place or any other traffic calming measures before going straight into a traffic light scheme? AK did not know the reason for this. JV said APC had tried to find solutions but had got nowhere. NB refuted this and said the only reason APCs work came to an end was due to frustration and obstruction from certain quarters in relation to any solution that did not involve traffic lights.

[Additional post meeting information - 20mph signing scheme was investigated by ESCC Traffic & Safety team in 2009 on behalf of APC. The scheme was costed up to be delivered at APC’s expense. But in 2010 APC decided not to proceed with it.]

JV has completed the review of the proposals prepared by Amey. NB helpfully went through the plan with him identifying each property that only has front access and whose deliveries would block the road if in the traffic light area.

NB asked whether traffic lights still required street lighting. The answer is no for traffic lights but yes if pedestrian crossings are included. JV and AK stated that street lights were not an option given the sensitive nature of the High St and SDNPA policies. They therefore confirmed that there would be no pedestrian crossings included in the scheme. NB asked whether the scheme was therefore being designed for the benefit of drivers only. He raised that a number of properties from Lavender Cottage to Weavers Cottage had no pavement on their side of the road and there were business such as Chestnuts tea room which people would want to cross the road to. The concern is that a driver on a green light, believing that the road ahead was his and not expecting there to be anything in the road would proceed with potentially limited forward visibility (because of the bend in the road) at a greater speed than at present to meet a pedestrian in the road. JV stated that this will be considered as part of the design review.

The Market Square was discussed and whether it was still proposed to change this into a one-way system. JV stated that he recognises that this is an important space in the village and gatherings such as the Morris men or Harveys horse drawn dray could not happen without a road closure order if a one way system were introduced. He acknowledged that the road in front of the shop and Smugglers as well as the Singing Kettle etc was very much a shared space.

It was raised that in the past large vehicles have become stuck trying to turn left into North St. JV agreed that the buses would no longer be able to pick up or set down in the Square. JD highlighted that this would have a significant detrimental effect on many elderly people who rely on the buses.

JV stated he did not wish to see a one way gyratory included in the scheme. He said that if the northern traffic lights (currently positioned roughly outside the Manor House) were to remain there then Market Square would have to be a one way gyratory. His task was to see if the lights could be moved further south, closer to Star Lane. It was raised that this risked a greater negative impact on the Star, George and Tudor House as village hostelries.

JV stated that the current plan, as present at the consultation exercise in 2016, showed Star Lane being one way. Pedestrians would still be able to walk up a one way street and measures to ‘contra-flow’ cyclists could be incorporated into the proposals. As for equestrians the requirements are less clear. The proposal of converting Star Lane to one way forms part of the scheme review JV is undertaking.

NB asked if they are going to consider the data that Conserve Alfriston obtained through their exhibition/consultation as they had double the turnout of the village than those who responded to the ESCC consultation as well as canvassing directly the view of the village’s businesses, nearly all of whom objected to the scheme. JV and AK said that they ‘would acknowledge’ this data. NB urged them to do more and include it in the decision making process as it was a valid part of the political process.

JV finished the meeting by stating that the further data taken from the recent cameras in the High Street will be analysed and an incident log prepared. NB asked whether APC could receive this data, as well as the most recent traffic count data, once finalised which JV and AK both agreed. The timeline now is to continue doing the modelling work, a meeting in October with AK to update so the next update to APC will be October.

**Meeting concluded at 16:00**