

To: Thanet Joint Transportation Board
By: Head of Programmed Works Service
Date: 14 March 2013
Subject: East Kent Access Phase 2
Classification: For Information

Summary: Update on Traffic Management Measures, Cottington Bridge Remedial Works and Lord of the Manor Junction

Introduction

East Kent Access Phase 2 opened to traffic in May 2012. The chosen route was dictated by the significant physical and environmental constraints that prevented improvement of the existing roads. As a consequence it was always understood that some traffic management measures would be required along the bypassed roads in order to help discourage their continued use by through traffic.

Following local discussion and consultation, proposed measures were reported to this JTB in March 2012. The proposals consisted of kerb build outs – four along Canterbury Road West and three along Sandwich Road together with a minor entry feature at Ebbsfleet Roundabout. These are referenced (1 to 8) on the attached plan.

The works were constructed during the summer of 2012 and were fully completed in September 2012.

The works received criticism but such measures often attract immediate and varying views and experience shows that change does require time for drivers to adjust to new layouts. Some of the criticism was difficult to accept from drivers who were clearly on through journeys who did not need to use the old roads and who the measures were specifically targeted at to encourage them to use the new road. However, concerns expressed from within the local Cliffend Community were harder to dismiss.

Although keen to avoid a premature reaction, Officers share some of the local community concerns and this is why additional coning, lighting and 30mph 'black on yellow' signage is being maintained to give time for further thought and possible additional measures to be considered.

The Issues

Kerb build outs as a solution were not chosen lightly but road humps or road closures were not a viable or locally acceptable option and some physical interruption to drivers were considered necessary to help achieve the objectives.

Unfortunately the open nature of the area does not provide a good location for traffic management measures. Despite this open nature visibility to some of the build outs is not ideal. Closing speeds at the build outs can be high and this is not helped by poor and impatient driver behaviour that is a frequent complaint by local people.

In addition to the 7.5 tonne lorry ban, recent surveys show that traffic flows have been reduced by about 50% and average speeds are generally unchanged although local people say that maximum speeds are higher as a result of the reduced traffic.

The Proposals

Canterbury Road West

Narrow the exits from Cliffsend and Lord of the Manor roundabouts to give added emphasis to the road being a local road serving Cliffsend.

Remove the kerb build outs (1 & 4) near Cliffsend and Lord of the Manor roundabouts which are remote from the village and where visibility is not ideal.

Retain the kerb build outs (2 & 3) but increase their visibility by focusing signage and bollards on the build outs together with village gateway features.

Rationalise the speed limits by reducing the village approach sections from 50 mph to 40mph.

Sandwich Road

Enhance the entry features (5) on the exit from Ebbsfleet roundabout to give added emphasis to the road being a local road serving Cliffsend.

Remove immediately the build out (6) on the southern approach to the village. Officers share the concern of local people that it is too close to the garage and the risks associated with drivers exiting the garage and pedestrian movements in this area.

However, a build out is still considered necessary and it will be relocated further south to ensure that all drivers going around the build out will have returned to the nearside lane before reaching the garage.

Retain the kerb build out (7) but increase its visibility by focusing signage and bollards on the build outs together with village gateway features. The location is not ideal but together with build out (6) it is considered desirable to physically define the village section.

Build out (8) was removed immediately after it was constructed because of concerns about visibility and those concerns remain and it will not be reinstated.

Narrow the exit from Lord of the Manor roundabouts to give added emphasis to the road being a local road serving Cliffsend.

Traffic Speed

Traffic speed through the village is a significant local concern but this is a particularly difficult issue. On Canterbury Road West, the compactness of the village section with housing or commercial development either side, narrow carriageways with limited footways and several side road connections are all attributes that are consistent with a 30mph limit and seem to assist reasonably close compliance. Sandwich Road is more linear and open with housing only on one side and 40mph is an appropriate speed limit. Surveys show that typical average speeds are not that excessive. The concern is that with less traffic there are a number of drivers exceeding the speed limit by some considerable margin but unfortunately this is a problem in many places and is particularly difficult to deal with other than by local formal Police enforcement or local action such as Speedwatch.

The existing interactive speed signs on both roads will be reviewed and upgrading considered and traffic volumes and speeds will continue to be monitored at intervals. The local community is already pro-active on Speed Watch but further advice will be offered.

Consultation and Way Forward

The concerns and proposals have been discussed with Cliffsend Parish Council and the Residents Association at a meeting on 29 November that was also attended by the local County Members.

There is no easy solution to discouraging through traffic but the further proposals are a pragmatic way forward that will also seek to address the safety concerns. When the proposals have been considered and developed in more detail a further meeting will be held with the Parish Council and Residents Association.

When the initial traffic management measures were agreed it was anticipated that some further measures might be required and hence a contingency funding need from the overall East Kent Access project. When the further proposals have been developed and costed, affordability will need to be considered but it is anticipated that further works could be implemented in June/July.

Cottington Bridge

Before the opening of the new road we were aware of some settlement either side of Cottington Bridge and traffic management has been in place to allow the cause to be investigated and remedial works implemented.

The embankment immediately behind the abutments of the bridge is composed of lightweight polystyrene blocks covered with a water proof membrane. Investigation has shown that the probable cause of the settlement is water being trapped above the membrane making the underlying foundation of the road soft that in turn leads to settlement of the road surface, kerbing and features such as safety barrier and noise fence.

In November and December additional drainage works were installed. Road and kerb levels will be monitored for a several months to confirm that the problem has been successfully dealt with and then kerbs will be realigned, safety barrier adjusted back to its correct height and the carriageway surfacing replaced.

A temporary speed limit of 50mph is being maintained locally because of the uneven road surface.

Responsibility for the design and the remedial works is with the contractor and there is no cost liability for the County Council. East Kent Access has been a successful project completed on budget and ahead of time and the contractor has been committed to fulfilling his responsibility to solve this problem.

Lord of the Manor Junction

Lord of the Manor junction does have an unconventional layout and its design was influenced and constrained by the railway line, local topography and nearby property. It has attracted some comment but as with the traffic management measures, new layouts do need time to settle down and for drivers to become familiar with how it operates.

However, comments have been made about the exit onto the junction from Sandwich Road and signage and lane destination markings and this will be reviewed.

Recommendation

For Information

Contact officer:

John Farmer