

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL COMMITTEE (GUILDFORD)



**SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL**

DATE: **20 September 2016**

**LEAD
OFFICER:** **Robert Curtis, Transport Strategy Project Manager, Transport Policy**

SUBJECT: **Walnut Tree Close proposed experimental traffic restriction**

DIVISION: **Guildford West, Guildford South West, Guildford South East**

SUMMARY OF ISSUES:

This paper is to brief members on the outcome of a six week consultation regarding proposed traffic restrictions on Walnut Tree Close which was held between 13 June and 24 July 2016. From this, and other considerations, recommendations are made regarding the next steps for Walnut Tree Close.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Local Committee (Guildford) is asked to:

- (i) Note the results (**Annex 1**) of the high level analysis of the public engagement event proposed traffic restrictions on Walnut Tree Close and note that further consideration of the comments received will be taken forward as the scheme develops.
- (ii) Agree the proposed trial of two different options for Walnut Tree Close; it is further requested that decision regarding details of the proposed trial can be delegated to the Transportation Task Group.
- (iii) Note that the Local Committee will be updated on a regular basis during the life of the project.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

To enable the Local Committee to determine the outcome of the project and to keep the Local Committee informed of the scheme development, the Local Committee is asked to note the results of the analysis of the public engagement event, included in **Annex 1**, together with supporting information of **Annex 2** the exhibition panels and **Annex 3** the questionnaire and **Annex 4** which compares the level of engagement and responses with similar previous consultations.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 1.1. The Guildford Town Centre Transport Package contained a number of schemes which were approved by Local Committee prior to submission of a business case to the EM3 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in December 2015 (minute ref 115/15 refers). This package as a whole was approved by the LEP, however, it was acknowledged that one of the schemes, the proposed closure of Walnut Tree Close, would require further consultation.
- 1.2. The scheme was initially investigated for inclusion within the Town Centre Transport Package after a petition signed by 342 residents was handed to SCC in 2013 requesting that the road be made closed to through-traffic. Residents claimed that a significant amount of the traffic on the road use it as a “rat run” between the A25 and the gyratory.
- 1.3. The gyratory is a major cause of severance and suffers from heavy congestion at peak times. Drivers exiting Walnut Tree Close onto the gyratory and wishing to continue south must cross two lanes of one-way traffic in order to merge into the correct lane; increasing the risk of road traffic accidents and exacerbating congestion issues by blocking gyratory traffic.
- 1.4. As well as the impact on the gyratory, Walnut Tree Close suffers from heavy congestion at both ends. Difficulties for drivers exiting on to the gyratory can lead to extended queuing back along Walnut Tree Close. During congested periods, it becomes difficult two-way traffic to flow unimpeded along the narrow road, leading to incidences of vehicles mounting the pavement to allow oncoming traffic to pass and contributing to safety concerns.
- 1.5. The consultation was carried out for 6 weeks between 13 June and 24 July 2016. Annex 1 provides an analysis of the feedback. The consultation asked respondents to consider 2 options for Walnut Tree Close; with the results of the consultation assisting with the decision on which option to take forward as an Experimental Traffic Order which would be in place for up to 18 months. Respondents were also given the option to “do nothing”.
- 1.6. The two options presented were:
 - A point closure of Walnut Tree Close, preventing any vehicles (except emergency services) from passing through a barrier to be positioned immediately north of the access road to Yorkies Bridge on Walnut Tree Close
 - A one-way restriction enabling vehicles to travel north along Walnut Tree Close but preventing southbound vehicles from travelling along the section between Kernal Court and immediately north of the access road to Yorkies Bridge.
- 1.7. A study of the traffic using Walnut Tree Close has indicated that a full closure could mean that in a typical 12-hour period from 07:00 to 19:00 up to 6,500 vehicles would re-route. The one-way option could mean approximately 4,700 vehicles re-route through the same period, though this might also lead to an increase in northbound traffic.

2. ANALYSIS:

Public consultation headline summary

- 2.1. The project was the subject of a six week public consultation between 13 June and 24 July 2016.
- 2.2. Annex 1 provides a more detailed report on the public consultation but the headline findings have been set out in this report (paragraph 3.2).
- 2.3. The consultation received the highest response rate of any recent major schemes consultation with 630 questionnaire responses received.
- 2.4. A number of emails and letters were received as part of the consultation. These contained a number of detailed points, where these are related to items in the package of schemes, these will be considered under detailed design. Wider comments will be shared with appropriate partner organisations.
- 2.5. Overall there was an approximately even split in expressed preferences for Option 1, Option 2 and Neither Option 1 nor 2, as shown in figure 1.

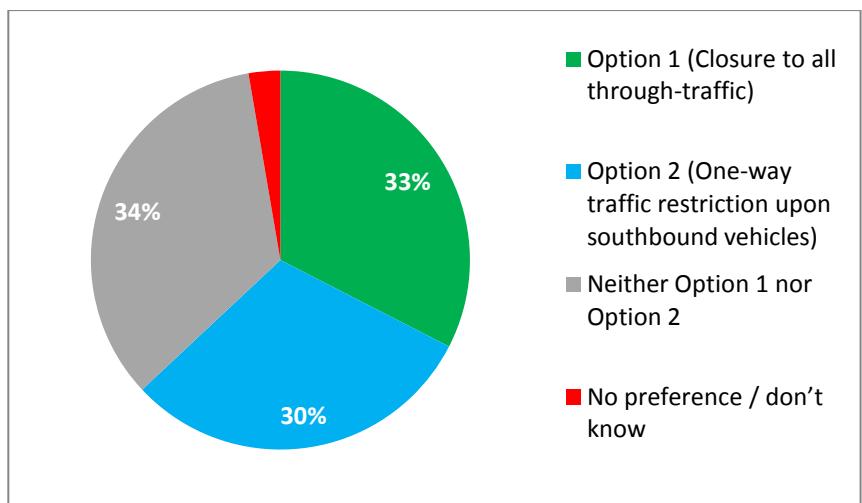


Figure 1: Expressed Preference for options in consultation

- 2.6. From Figure 1 it can be inferred that the majority of respondents (63%) expressed a preference for either Option 1 or Option 2, indicating that there is a significant degree of support for some level of restriction to through-traffic along Walnut Tree Close. However, it should be noted that this does not guarantee a majority of support for a single measure as it cannot be assumed that a respondent who supported Option 1 would also necessarily be supportive of Option 2.
- 2.7. Annex 1 details the responses and the reasons respondents provided for their preference. Responses from businesses and employees based on Walnut Tree Close indicated a greater preference for neither Option 1 nor Option 2 whilst residents typically favoured Option 1.
- 2.8. A variety of comments and concerns were provide by the respondents, the most common related to:
 - Walnut Tree Close is currently unsafe to walk and cycle along and there are concerns over general road safety along the road.

- The issue of congestion along Walnut Tree Close during peak hours was generally recognised as a problem by respondents, even amongst those who did not agree with options that have been proposed.
- A significant number of respondents raised concerns that either option would divert traffic onto alternative routes that are already congested.
- Residents in particular were concerned about the noise and air pollution along the road.
- Many respondents felt that either option would create inconvenience by extending routes and increasing journey times. This was particularly noticeable amongst employees and businesses based on Walnut Tree Close.
- Many respondents felt that Walnut Tree Close is a vital through route to the town centre and railway station, particularly for those based to the north of the town.

2.9. Some respondents raised concerns over the effect of the proposed restrictions on business, with suggestions that custom may be lost or operating costs may increase due to the measures.

3. OPTIONS:

3.1. The original plan for the scheme was to carry out an experimental scheme for a period of 18 months. The consultation has proved inconclusive with regard to any single preferred option and so it is suggested that to trial both options would enable a full assessment of the impact either has on traffic both on Walnut Tree Close and also the surrounding streets

3.2. Whichever option is preferred, there would be appropriate monitoring enabling the impact of the changes on surrounding streets to be assessed; following a warming up period, if the traffic appeared to be significantly worsened on surrounding streets it will be possible to amend or stop the trial if necessary.

3.3. In addition to this, close consultation with residents and businesses will enable us to fully assess the impact of any restriction on those closest to the issue.

3.4. Table 1 details the options:

Option a	Do nothing
Option b	Full closure
Option c	One-way operation
Option d	Trial both restrictions

3.5. Currently, discussion is underway with Surrey County Council Transport Studies Team to establish the monitoring regime. Any trial, if approved, would be subject to an Experimental Traffic Order lasting a maximum of 18 months. In order to establish base line data, monitoring of the current situation would be carried out from early 2017; it is anticipated that the trial would commence in

early 2018 following further design and analysis work and once an Experiment Traffic Order is put in place.

4. CONSULTATIONS:

- 4.1. The project was the subject of a 6-week public engagement between 13 June and 24 July 2016.
- 4.2. Officers from the county council were available to answer questions regarding the proposals.
- 4.3. A specific public web page was created for this project which gave details of the exhibition and the questionnaire. The materials on display at the exhibition were also available on the web site.
- 4.4. Notification of the public engagement event was also sent to various interested groups through the Local Transport Plan stakeholder engagement consultee schedule. Full details of engagement can be found in **Annex 1**.

5. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1. The scheme is fully funded as part of the Guildford Town Centre Transport Package.

6. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1. It is the objective of Surrey Highways to treat all users of the public highway equally and with understanding. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been drafted for the Guildford Town Centre Transport Package and further analysis will be completed for the selected option on Walnut Tree Close.

7. LOCALISM:

- 7.1. The headline benefits the scheme to the local area are as follows:

- Encourage more walking, cycling, bus and rail travel
- Reduce congestion and its cost to local businesses
- Help people get to work, retail and railway stations
- Reduce personal injury accidents.

8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Crime and Disorder	No significant implications arising from this report.
Sustainability (including Climate Change and Carbon Emissions)	Set out below
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications arising from this report
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	No significant implications arising from this report
Public Health	Set out below.

8.1. Sustainability and Public Health implications

Increased walking and cycling, where it replaces motorised forms of transport such as the car, will improve air quality and reduce carbon emission levels, which is a key objective of the Surrey LTP. Passenger transport and modal shift from the car to buses/rail are a further key objective of the Surrey LTP.

Transport is responsible for one third of carbon emission in Surrey. Surrey's Local Transport Plan has a target to reduce carbon emissions from (non-motorway) transport by 10% (absolute emissions) by 2020, increasing to 25% reduction by 2035 from 2007 baseline of 2,114k tonnes.

Increased walking and cycling has a positive impact on the health of a person. The NHS identifies cycling as an activity which provides significant health benefits. The emerging Surrey Health and Well-being Strategy has identified obesity as one of the priority public health challenges.

It could be that increased levels of walking and cycling to and around the town centre will have a positive effect on the local retail economy as some recent studies suggesting that pedestrians and cyclists actually spend more on a trip into a town than a motorist.

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 9.1. The consultation has shown that there is a general agreement that Walnut Tree Close requires improvement, however, there is no consensus towards which of the proposed restrictions would be most amenable.
- 9.2. A restriction to Walnut Tree Close may help reduce the amount of traffic on the road itself and also the number of vehicles exiting Walnut Tree Close at Bridge Street where it joins the gyratory
- 9.3. There is uncertainty as to how any restriction will impact on businesses
- 9.4. Based on the conclusions, it is suggested that a trial remains appropriate, though because no individual option was significantly preferred, it may be beneficial to trial both options as per Option D above. The timings and details of these trials will be determined following further discussion with relevant officers in Guildford BC and Surrey CC. Throughout the trial period careful monitoring and liaison with businesses and residents will assist with determining what solution is likely to prove most successful.

10. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- 10.1. If the Local Committee approve of the recommendation, the details regarding the trial and the monitoring regime will be fully developed. It is proposed that these details are discussed at the Transportation Task Group and the decision regarding these be delegated to that group.
- 10.2. It is anticipated that the trial would commence in January 2018.

Contact Officer: Robert Curtis

Job title: Project Manager, Transport Policy

Contact number 0208 2132721

Consulted

Surrey County Council officers including Transport Policy Team, Transport Studies, Place and Sustainability Group and Local Highways.

Guildford Borough Council officers

Annexes:

Annex 1 – Public Consultation Analysis

Annex 2 – Exhibition Panels

Annex 3 – Questionnaire

Annex 4 – Public engagement comparison

Sources/background papers:

None

This page is intentionally left blank