

South Street, Deal – Approval to undertake Public Consultation

A report by the East Kent Divisional Manager to the Highways Advisory Board on 9 January 2007

Introduction

1. On the 18th September 2006 a report was tabled to the Dover Joint Transportation Board (JTB) concerning a proposal to improve the South Street area, Deal to provide better and safer bus interchange facilities (see Appendix A). The report recommended approval to a scheme drawing for consultation. The JTB did not support this recommendation (see Appendix B) and thus an improvement to South Street cannot now be considered further.
2. At a subsequent Highways Meeting of the Dover County Members on the 24th October 2006, the opportunity was taken to better understand the reasoning behind this decision. After considering the discussion that took place at the JTB and in recognition that public consultation was still appropriate, the four local Members present gave their unanimous support to my seeking approval to overturn the JTB decision.

Discussion

3. Over the last 3 years, there has been a protracted debate locally about plans to improve the South Street area to cater for the various competing needs, particularly buses. A number of options have been subject to public consultation previously and the latest proposals have been drawn up, taking into account all the comments from the previous consultations. I consider that the new proposals provide the best practical balance between the various needs of South Street and thus the original report to the JTB recommended approval to go to public consultation to share this openly with the public and all interested parties.
4. Most of the JTB Members who commented on the proposal expressed some concern about various aspects of them, acknowledging the difficulty in satisfying all the competing needs, thus concluding that it would probably be better to “do nothing”. One local District Member representing Deal felt that the scheme promoted a sensible arrangement to enable progress towards introduction and was openly disappointed at the lack of support in just seeking the public's view at this stage.
5. It remains particularly important to improve interchange facilities here for the new “Diamond” buses that have been introduced earlier this year as a result of a successful ‘Kickstart’ bid. It would also demonstrate our support for the proposed Quality Bus Partnership in Dover that is to be progressed following the approval of the Dover JTB at their most recent meeting on the 13th November 2006.
6. The opportunity to implement the scheme this financial year has now gone. The associated timescales with the progression of a consultation can now be slightly more relaxed in recognition of the concern that was expressed at the JTB. A bid for funding an improvement to South Street as an Integrated Transport Measure for implementation in 2007/8 is being made.

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Conclusions

7. The complex use of South Street and the current layout still give significant cause for concern and the identified need to make improvements has not gone away. Despite the challenge of trying to find an ideal solution it is important that the position reached is shared openly with the local community and that their assistance is gained in a final endeavour to develop and promote a scheme that on balance provides the improvement that County and District Members, the Town Council and the wider public all recognised the need for at the outset of consideration some three years ago. The new proposal attempts to balance up the various hopes, aspirations and concerns in a way that achieves the optimum scheme to enable progression. If this does not emerge now, then disappointingly the JTB recommendation can be duly enacted.
8. Member approval is now sought to my approaching the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste with a view to concluding the formal process to overturn the JTB recommendation and thus to undertake a formal public consultation.

Recommendations

9. Subject to the views of this Board it is proposed to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste that a public consultation on the improvement scheme proposal for South Street be undertaken, contrary to the advisory recommendation of the Dover Joint Transportation Board.
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APPENDIX A

Original South Street, Deal Report to Dover Joint Transportation Board 18/09/2006.

Recommendation of Dover Joint Transportation Board 18/09/2006.

161 SOUTH STREET, DEAL: INTERCHANGE PROVISION – AN UPDATE ON PROGRESS

Mr M Smith presented the Board with the revised proposals for South Street, Deal, which it was intended would be submitted for public consultation.

The consensus of opinion among the Board was that the proposals were unsuitable for South Street's role as an important transport interchange location and did not enhance the urban environment of the area. Councillor N J Collor questioned the assumptions made in the proposals over the dimensions of delivery vehicles and loading bay access.

There were concerns expressed that the proposed two week consultation period was inadequate and did not allow sufficient time for key stakeholders to engage. The members of the Board also questioned the list of consultees identified and highlighted the absence of local businesses and District and County Council Ward Councillors.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the scheme proposed for South Street, Deal (EK0115-01) not be sent for consultation.
- (b) That the funding allocated to the South Street, Deal scheme be transferred to the Park Street, Deal scheme to enable work to commence as soon as possible.