

A229 Royal Engineers Way/Stacey Street Roundabout, Maidstone  
Proposed Changes to Northern Entry Arrangements

A report by the Head of Transportation and Planning , Mid Kent Division of KHS to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways & Waste

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## **Introduction**

1. Traffic flow in Maidstone has long been a concern. The County Council as part of its Vision for Kent strategy and towards 2010 Action Plan wants to tackle this. This involves a series of measures to aid traffic movement and properly controlled roadworks to minimise disruption to the road user.
2. As part of this commitment the Traffic Management Centre was recently set up and will use Urban Traffic Control. Close circuit television, bus real time information, remote monitoring, travel information and variable message signs to improve journey times. Included within the series of proposed packages is to remove unnecessary bus lanes and yellow lines.

## **Background**

3. The roundabout was created as an integral part of the construction of the Maidstone Spine Road in the early nineties with a bus stop and dedicated bus lane adjacent to what is now the White Rabbit Public House. The original design was modified as works progressed to provide only a single exit lane for traffic leaving the roundabout and entering the Stacey Street link with a protected left turning lane for buses and taxis.
4. The inclusion of the dedicated bus lane was based on the anticipated additional bus movements from the development of 'Park and Ride' facilities on the northern side of Maidstone town. This facility has never materialised with the result that the bus lane provision is under utilised with only four peak hour bus movements per hour compared to the minimum of six published in the Kent Bus Strategy.
5. In line with the commitment to reduce congestion, an investigation into the possibility of providing three lanes for all traffic ( a left turn only and two straight ahead) on Royal Engineers' Way approach to the roundabout leading to Stacey Street was undertaken. It was found that this could be achieved and the alterations would provide additional capacity for all vehicles.

## Design Considerations

6. The existing layout, providing a protected left turning lane for limited bus and taxi usage, cannot be retained if the third lane of entry is converted to all traffic usage. There is insufficient length of road between the exit point and the adjoining Pelican crossing and the approach to the Sandling Road roundabout, to safely accommodate the various traffic weaving manoeuvres.
7. In order to provide a safe exit for all traffic from the existing bus lane, it would be necessary to shorten the existing island to remove the protection to left filtering traffic so that it has to give way to traffic leaving the roundabout and generally to improve visibility.
8. The existing splitter island includes a raised flower/shrub bed, a small tree and a lighting column. To obtain adequate visibility, the raised bed would need to be eliminated, the tree removed, and the lighting column repositioned. Whilst the remainder of the lowered island needs to have anti pedestrian surfacing, a section could be retained as low growth shrub planting.
9. The left turning lane would need to be controlled by a 'Give Way' arrangement which would need to be very clearly signed and would require an appropriate 'map style' sign on the approach.
10. The bus stop is currently sited within the commencement of the designated bus lane and would be both difficult and costly to move especially as only a few buses actually stop at this location. By highlighting the bus stop position (red surfacing) and then defining the remainder of the left turning lane by buff coloured high friction surfacing, the change of use could be clearly identified. Careful positioning of left turn bifurcation road marking arrows will enhance this arrangement.
11. The proposal was the subject of a report to the meeting of a report to the meeting of Maidstone Joint Transportation Board (JTB) on 18 January 2006 and Members recommended to no further action be taken to in respect of the proposal.
12. The issue was then reported to the meeting Highway Advisory Board (HAB) and Members on 7 March 2006 and Members resolved that the Traffic Regulation Order to revoke the Bus Lane be published. This involves consulting with stakeholders including the bus companies. In total ten responses were received and of these eight objected to the proposal. These were reported to meeting of Maidstone JTB on 24 July 2006 and Members recommended that an analysis of the current usage of the bus lane and potential benefit of removing it, prior to the implementation be carried out.

13. As indicated in 4 above the bus lane was intended for the possible development of a 'Park and Ride' facility on the northern side of the town. This never materialised and the result is a much underutilised bus lane. With this fact in mind it was felt the further investigative work would not be an appropriate use of limited resources. The issue was, therefore referred to the Cabinet Member for Environment, highways and Waste, who subsequently met with the chairman and vice-chairman of Maidstone JTB and the chairman of HAB. It was agreed that the proposal be progressed.

### **Cost Implications**

14. It is anticipated that the estimated total cost of this work would be in the region of £30,000 inclusive of fees and charges associated with the appropriate revocation of the existing Traffic Regulation Order.

### **Discussion**

15. A scheme of this nature has both benefits and dis-benefits which are detailed below:-

#### **Benefits**

- Potential to ease traffic congestion at peak times
- Relatively easy left turning manoeuvre avoiding direct entry into the circulatory traffic on the roundabout.
- Loss of a dedicated bus and taxi lane facility with slight extension of delay times to bus services especially at peak periods. However, Arriva has accepted that the dis-benefit to buses would be minimal and would be outweighed by greater capacity for all traffic.

### **Recommendation**

16. Given the limited benefit of the bus lane and the resultant congestion at this location during peak times, implementation of the proposal will help traffic flow. This benefit will outweigh the slight delay that may occur to bus journey times. The Cabinet Member is asked to approve the proposal.

Behdad Haratbar  
Head of Transport Planning  
Kent Highway services  
Mid Kent Division

# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL - RECORD OF DECISION

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| <b>DECISION TAKEN BY</b><br><br><b>Keith Ferrin</b> |
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| <b>DECISION NO.</b><br><br><b>06/00916</b> |
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*If decision is likely to disclose exempt information please specify the relevant paragraph(s) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972*

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| <b>Subject:</b><br><br><b>Proposed Northern Entry Arrangements, A229 Royal Engineers' Way/Stacey Street, Maidstone.</b> |
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| <b>Decision:</b><br><br><b>Removal of the bus lane and providing three lanes for all traffic (a left turn only and two straight ahead) on Royal Engineers' Way approach to the roundabout leading to Stacey Street, Maidstone.</b> |
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| <b>Any Interest Declared when the Decision was Taken</b> |
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| <b>Reason(s) for decision, including alternatives considered and any additional information:</b><br><br><p>The bus lane was created in anticipation of a Park and Ride facility in northern Maidstone town. This facility never materialised, therefore the bus lane is underutilised. Furthermore, significant congestion occurs at this location during peak times. Converting the bus lane into left turn only for all traffic will help reduce the congestion. Details of the proposal are set out in the report to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste dated 10 December 2006.</p> |
| <b>Background Documents:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Report to the meeting of Maidstone JTB on 18 January 2006</li> <li>2. Report to the meeting of Highway Advisory Board on 7 March 2006</li> <li>3. Report to the meeting of Maidstone JTB on 24 July 2006</li> <li>4. Report to Cabinet Member for Environment, Highway and Waste dated 10 December 2006.</li> </ol>   |

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signed

.....22 December 2006.....  
date

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| Decision Referred to Cabinet Scrutiny |  |    |  |
| YES                                   |  | NO |  |

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| Cabinet Scrutiny Decision to Refer Back for Reconsideration |  |    |  |
| YES   |  | NO |  |

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| Reconsideration Record Sheet Issued |  |    |  |
| YES                                 |  | NO |  |

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| Reconsideration of Decision Published |  |  |  |
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