

Okehampton Town Centre Consultation Response

1. Prior to the COVID19 pandemic, did you regularly visit or travel through Okehampton Town Centre?

Yes – both visit town centre and travel through

2. Prior to the COVID19 pandemic, how did you travel to Okehampton town centre.

By car, on foot, by public transport, by bicycle

3. How, if at all, has your travel to or through Okehampton town centre changed during the COVID19 pandemic?

Councillors and members of staff have been travelling less and/or working from home for part of the period in line with government guidelines

4. Do you agree with the need for improved traffic flow through Okehampton town centre

Yes

5. Please explain why you agree/disagree with the need for this improvement

Traffic congestion causes extreme frustration among drivers, increases air pollution and affects work/life balance.

No improvement in the situation will lead to a decrease in footfall and economic wellbeing of businesses and residents alike.

6. Do you support the proposal to remove traffic lights from Okehampton town centre

Not sure

7. Please explain why you do/do not support this proposal

Okehampton Town Council is firmly of the view that a town centre access road would be the best solution to alleviate town centre congestion in the long term, however DCC clearly states within the consultation documentation that they will not support such a scheme for stated reasons. However, the Town Council has been asking DCC to investigate the traffic flow issues for years and therefore support the fact the proposed solutions to the congestion have been offered for consultation.

Correspondence received from members of the public stating they were not in support of the removal of traffic lights have been received and is recognised by the Town Council, hence its 'not sure' response to Q6.

There are concerns that total removal of traffic lights could bring problems for pedestrians being able to ascertain when they can cross safely, these concerns could be addressed with the introduction of pelican crossings.

There is a planning condition on the timing of deliveries to the supermarkets accessed via Market Street and other businesses. The delivery to Wetherspoons is required to be made on George Street and delivery vehicles need to be parked up on the highway and facing the junction to make the delivery. Has any modelling been carried out with regard to how these vehicles will be able to turn effectively in the absence of traffic lights stopping the traffic from all other junctions – particularly from George Street into West Street/Fore Street?

School buses turn into Mill Road to drop students off at the College and then come out via Market Street. Again, is it going to be possible for those buses to make a right turn safely from George Street? As with any traffic, other lanes have to make way, so do we need this?

The current traffic lights are set back from the junctions in Market Street/George Street. This ensures that vehicles turning have enough space to do so. If vehicles are having to come to the front of the junction and then wait at the give way signs, there won't be room for vehicles to turn into the junction. If a larger vehicle wishes to turn left from Fore Street into George Street, where there is a vehicle on George Street wishing to turn right, the driver will need to creep forward into the stream of traffic to clear the way. OTC would value the opinion of the Highways Engineer regarding the safety of this manoeuvre.

There has been an increase in the volume of traffic travelling through the town year on year which has exacerbated congestion to the supermarkets and other businesses in the Market Street area of the town for at least 60 years.

8. Please order the junctions for improvement by their level of importance to you. Please do not give the two junctions the same level of importance.

- a – Market Street Junction
- b – Mill Road Junction
- c – Barton Road Junction

9. Please explain why you give this order of preference

The Market Street junction is the one that causes the most problems through the town centre. Congestion at Barton Road should be alleviated somewhat by the development of the Link Road within the next couple of years.

10. Which package of junction improvement do you prefer?

Priority Junction arrangements

As a pedestrian it is dangerous trying to navigate some junctions, especially the Market Street junction and pedestrian crossings need to be a priority.

The Council has concerns that when traffic is diverted from A30 these new arrangements could cause more congestion and gridlock the town centre completely.

11. Which sub-option do you prefer for Mill Road junction?

Priority junction Option B – priority for Fore Street to east street turning movements

12. Which sub option do you prefer for Barton Road junction?

Mini Roundabout

13. Please explain why you chose the preferred package you selected in Q10

The majority of drivers, it is hoped, will be courteous to others, although it is acknowledged this may be a challenge. Signage and coloured road surfacing will help to highlight the changes

14. What form of pedestrian crossing facilities would you prefer for Market Street junction?

Facilities shown in the leaflet – priority junction package

15. n/a

16. What form of pedestrian crossing facilities would you prefer for Mill Road junction?

Facilities shown in the leaflet – priority junction package

17. n/a

18. What form of pedestrian crossing facilities would you prefer for Barton Road junction?

Other

19. If you selected other in Q18 please describe your preference for pedestrian crossing facilities for Barton Road junction.

Facilities shown in the leaflet, with some additional pedestrian crossings.

The existing centre refuge areas which are shown as to be removed in this scenario should be re-provided further along the road from their existing locations, one nearer the medical centre to further promote pedestrian safety.

20. Do you have any further comments or suggestions?

Okehampton Town Council acknowledges the view of DCC that the Town Centre Access Road in its previously discussed form is not deliverable, however, we would like it noted that Okehampton Town Council is firmly of the view that this option would be the best one to alleviate town centre congestion in the long term.

An enforceable 20mph town centre zone should be created from the Barton Road junction to the end of the houses on New Road and the roads leading into the town centre. This will slow traffic, thereby making the area safer for all other users.

Any changes should be on a trial basis for a minimum amount of time to encompass all weather and traffic conditions and the views of highways engineers is welcomed as to whether this should be undertaken encompassing changes to all junctions or for each junction on an individual basis.

While not forming one of the options in this consultation, has any further thought been given to making the pavement narrower where School Way joins the mini roundabout to allow two lanes of traffic – one to turn right and straight ahead and the other to turn left only?

With the delivery of the new Link Road at Parcel 3 of the Barratt David Wilson Homes development, it should alleviate the congestion at Barton Road. However, it is highly likely that it will simply move the congestion to the junction with Hambledon Road and Exeter Road. Those wishing to visit the town centre will turn right and this will increase the queues on Exeter Road and will not make any difference to the Market Street Junction.

Has a roundabout solution, possibly two mini roundabouts, at the Market Street junction been considered?

The filter lane on West Street to allow traffic to turn right into George Street could be reinstated allowing traffic to continue up Fore Street or left into Market Street unimpeded.

Correspondence from a member of the public suggests that traffic bays on Fore Street are removed thereby allowing 2 rows of traffic by the lights, one to travel straight on or turn right into Market Street, the other turning left into George Street. Has this option been considered?

A change of priority at the Northfield Road/North Street junction allowing traffic to travel up North Street and avoiding the Barton Road junction would assist in reducing traffic at that point.

Okehampton Town Council thanks DCC for putting forward fresh, albeit fairly radical ideas for consultation.