

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO APPEALS &  
COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE**

**FEBRUARY 2023**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF  
COMMUNITY SERVICES,  
ENVIRONMENT & CULTURE**

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL, NORTON TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENT  
SCHEME  
THE BOROUGH OF STOCKTON-ON-TEES, NORTON TOWN CENTRE, NORTON TRAFFIC  
REGULATION ORDER 2022 & THE BOROUGH OF STOCKTON-ON-TEES, NORTON TOWN  
CENTRE, NORTON TRAFFIC CALMING SCHEME**

**1.0 SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' views on unresolved objections received following the statutory advertising of a proposal to implement a range of restrictions associated with the Norton Town Centre Improvement scheme.

The scheme involves the reconfiguration of Norton High Street/South Road junction and the removal of the island and vehicular access at Harland Place. A northbound One-Way system of operation on High Street from the Norton Road junction up to its junction with South Road includes prohibiting driving on that length of High Street north of the island at the Norton Road/High Street junction. A 20mph speed limit on the section of High Street and South Road from its junctions with Norton Road in the south, to the north of the Darlington Lane/High Street roundabout. A reversal of the existing northbound One-Way system of operation to southbound One-Way on the High Street west side service road. The provision of two humped Puffin crossings at the existing Puffin crossings on the High Street and a raised junction at the High Street/ Holly Street junction. Additional parking, loading bays, taxi bays and disabled bays are proposed. Amendments to existing waiting/loading restrictions and new waiting/loading restrictions are proposed. An extension of the bus lane on Norton Road is also proposed as part of the scheme.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

- (i) Members give consideration to the objection raised by the 2 objectors and also to the comments of Community Services, Environment and Culture.
- (ii) The local Ward Councillors and the objectors be informed of the Committee's recommendation.
- (iii) The Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture consider the committee's recommendation.

**3.0 DETAIL**

3.1 The Council is proposing to create more high quality, safe and accessible public spaces in Norton for both residents and visitors to enjoy. Improvements are proposed for the southern section of Norton High Street after public views in the 'Let's Talk About Our Towns' consultation showed a need for improvements to parking, the public realm and continued support to local businesses. The proposed measures are associated with the Norton Town Centre Improvement scheme.

3.2 In December 2021, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council asked Norton's residents, businesses and visitors for their feedback on the proposed design for improvements to the

most southern section of Norton High Street. Residents, businesses and visitors were given the opportunity to provide their thoughts on the proposed design for the High Street, which included a new one-way system, flexible events spaces and public realm improvements to provide a more pedestrian-friendly environment to support the growing daytime and evening economy.

- 3.3 To complement the changes to the High Street, a programme of repairs to Norton duck pond have been completed. These improvements will create a welcoming space for people to enjoy the natural and protected beauty of the Village Green.
- 3.4 In addition, following concerns raised by local residents the Norton North Ward Councillors requested that the issue of speeding along the High Street be investigated through the Ward Transport Budget. There were specific concerns relating to the section of road near to the Norton duck pond, particularly travelling southbound towards the pedestrian crossing and the mini roundabout at this location. A raised plateau at the pedestrian Puffin crossing has been provided as a traffic calming measure. The proposed 20mph speed limit would extend northwards, beyond this new speed reducing feature.
- 3.5 Two objections to the proposed Traffic Regulation Order and Traffic Calming Notice associated with the scheme have been received, the objections focus around the proposed One-Way section of High Street between Norton Road and South Road, the proposed humped Puffin crossings and 20mph speed limit. **(See Appendix 1 – drawing no. TM2-340-2, Appendix 2 – drawing no. TM2-399 and Appendix 3 – drawing no. TM12-76-1)**
- 3.6 Technical Notes, presented to the Cabinet Member and Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and 18<sup>th</sup> October 2022 received approval for progression of the necessary Traffic Regulation Order and Traffic Calming Notice associated with the Norton Town Centre Improvement scheme.
- 3.7 Notices of the proposed scheme were advertised in the Evening Gazette, Stockton's website and on site on 1 December 2022 with the objection period ending on 22 December 2022. Following the publication of the Statutory Notices, the Transport Strategy and Road Safety Manager formally received two emails of objection.

#### **4.0 DETAILS OF THE OBJECTION/RESPONSE**

A copy of the outstanding objections (including the council response) from John Moore on behalf of Norton Methodist Church dated 14 December 2022 and Keith Mason dated 21 December 2022 are attached as **Appendix 4**.

##### **Summary of concerns from Mr Moore on behalf of Norton Methodist Church:**

1. Concerns relating to the proposed new junction with High Street and South Road. The southernmost part of the High Street is to become one way in a northward's direction and the present connection to Norton Road just north of the Methodist Church is to be closed off. This means that any traffic leaving premises on the one-way stretch of the High Street which wishes either to go south towards Stockton Centre or north towards the A19 at Billingham Bottoms will have to make a difficult turn across two lanes of traffic where this one-way section ends at the High Street/South Road junction. This will also affect the residents of Holly Street, Chapman Street, Fox Street and Picton Place. The situation will be exacerbated further by the fact that traffic from the service road on the west side of the High Street will also have to join this one-way section and use this junction and make this difficult turn. Traffic in both directions along Norton High Street can be heavy for most of the day and given the available routes this is unlikely to change.

2. The likely outcome is that traffic will be held up at this new junction and tail back down the one-way stretch of road. Vehicles caught up in this tailback could include ambulances from the care home, funeral corteges, buses and delivery vehicles. I would make the point that our church site is not just used for Sunday services at times when traffic might be lighter than usual but hosts a variety of Community activities throughout the week both in the daytime and evening. Faced with this difficult turn traffic for the A19 is likely to continue north up along the High Street to the Green and then down Beaconsfield Road. Traffic wishing to go south may well turn down Holly Street and make its way to Norton Avenue along Wrightson Street, Skerne Road and Grassholme Road etc. Neither of these is really the desirable outcome the proposal is trying to achieve.

3. The situation would be very much alleviated by the installation of a mini roundabout at the junction of the High Street and South Road (as there is at the northern end of the High Street at the junction with Darlington Lane). This would not encourage more traffic along the one-way section as vehicles wanting to go on up the High Street would still have to give way to traffic coming from the right (no different to the current proposal).

4. Reassurance requested that the church entrance and exit will remain free and unobstructed.

5. Under current proposals the residents of Nos 433, 435 and 437 Norton Road will no longer be able to park their vehicles on the road outside their houses. I feel I must make clear these residents have no right to park their vehicles to the rear of their properties. The area to the rear is all owned by Norton Methodist Church and is used and is needed for car parking for church activities and Community activities associated with the church buildings.

#### **Summary of response to Mr Moore:**

1. It is considered that turning right to access South Road under the proposed layout would be less complex than the current right turn across Norton Road, which is 3 lanes wide at the junction at the south end of the High Street including a bus lane, due to width and the higher traffic volume on Norton Road compared to the High Street and South Road. We have carried out traffic modelling on the proposed changes using vehicle volumes from surveys carried out on the current layout and this has shown that the proposed layout provides ample capacity for the changes to traffic movements that are required.

2. The emergency services and bus operators have been consulted on the proposals and no objections were raised. Buses would no longer use the one-way section under the proposal and instead would be accommodated via a second stop and shelter on Norton Road. All traffic has the choice to use the highway network to best meet their journey requirements and may therefore use the routes you describe should they wish to. The main scheme aims are to provide more space for pedestrians at the southern end of the High Street and to formalise short term parking to serve the businesses in this area, provision of one-way operation allows this through the repurposing of one traffic lane to pedestrian space and formalised parking.

3. Provision of a mini-roundabout at the High Street/South Road junction was reviewed at an early stage of the design process and rejected due to a range of factors including the suitability of a mini-roundabout in this location, road safety concerns of driver behaviour particularly regarding potential for U-turn movements and potential impact on the surrounding areas of protected Village Green due to the space required. Although a mini roundabout would potentially assist right turning vehicles turning right from the proposed one-way section of the High Street by ensuring southbound vehicles had to give way it would not change the requirement to give way to westbound traffic approaching from South Road. For these reasons a mini-roundabout layout was rejected early in the design phase of the scheme.

4. The church entrance and exit will remain free and unobstructed, and both have been checked to ensure a rigid body van can access and exit safely.
5. The proposed 20mph speed limit on the High Street requires a build out of the footway at the junction with North Road to physically reduce entrance speeds from Norton Road. Although there is no right for the residents of these properties to be able to park directly outside of their properties the scheme does maintain the significant unrestricted parking to the south of these properties. No objections have been received from residents of these properties.

**Summary of concerns from Mr Mason:**

1. Concerns relating to the lack of public consultation, specifically in regard to the proposed 20mph speed limit and raised crossings.
2. There is no excessive speed on the High Street. Where are the road traffic accidents to warrant the reduction in speed limits. Any accidents are down to bad driving.
3. Mr Mason agrees with the proposed One Way from Norton Road to the High Street/South Road. However, he does not agree with the proposed speed limit reduction or raised features.

**Summary of response to Mr Mason:**

1. The proposed Traffic Regulation Order has been advertised in the local press (Evening Gazette), on the Council's website and Notices were posted on site which allowed for a statutory 21 day objection period. The public consultation associated with formulating and developing the scheme and seeking comments was carried out before Statutory advertising, at the feasibility study stage.

These improvements are proposed following the 'Let's Talk About Our Towns' public consultation in 2020 to help accommodate the increasing footfall in Norton and to allow room for new opportunities and further growth. Two engagement sessions took place in Norton in December 2021. Residents, businesses and visitors were asked for their feedback on a proposed design for improvements to the southern section of Norton High Street and were given the opportunity to provide their thoughts via an online feedback form on the Council's website. The in-person engagement sessions and the online feedback form were promoted widely on social media and were included in an invitation that was posted to all households in Norton North ward and the surrounding area of the High Street. Updates have also been reported via Stockton News.

2. The scheme is not in response to the injury accident record, although it would have road safety benefits, but is part of the Council's Town Centres Investment Programme, with an aim to bring further improvements to Norton to create more high quality, safe and accessible spaces for residents and visitors to enjoy.
3. A consequence of One-Way systems is a likely increase in traffic speeds and given the numbers of pedestrian movements in this area it was considered necessary, for road safety, to construct a raised junction at Holly Street. Two new raised features are also proposed at the existing Puffin crossings at Norton Fisheries' and at the crossing between Tesco and Boots. The raised features would encourage consistently lower speeds along the High Street. The lower speeds also allow maximum use of the highway for all users including more parking bays, retaining bus stops and improved pedestrian safety as the inter visibility needed between users is reduced. Speed reduction is significant to casualty levels because if average speeds reduced by 1 mph, the accident rate would fall by approximately 6% on urban main roads and residential roads with low average speeds according to the Transport Research Laboratory. Higher speeds mean that drivers have less time to identify and react

to what is happening around them, and it takes longer for the vehicle to stop. It removes the driver's safety margin and turns near misses into crashes. On this basis it is recommended that the raised features and 20mph are needed in order to contribute to the success of the scheme in Norton.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

To be funded through the Council's Town Centre Improvement Programme.

## **6.0 POLICY CONTENT**

The proposal is consistent with the Council's Communities Strategy and Inclusive Growth Strategy.

## **7.0 CONSULTATION**

The Officers Traffic Group, local Ward Councillors, the Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture and the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport were consulted on the proposals.

Stockton Hackney Carriage Drivers Association have been consulted throughout the design process.

The bus operator expressed concerns regarding the proposed 1:15 gradient for the approaches to the raised Puffin crossings on the High Street. It was therefore agreed that the proposed raised Puffin crossings gradient be 1:20, however, buses will no longer use that part of the High Street to the south of South Road, for that reason the gradient of the proposed raised junction at Holly Street will remain at 1:15.

Statutory consultations for the proposed Traffic Regulation Order and Traffic Calming Notice involving advertising on site, Stockton's website and in the local press were undertaken; this resulted in two outstanding objections being received. The objectors will be invited to the Appeals Committee.

## **8.0 CONCLUSIONS**

The proposed measures will ensure that vehicles are driven at an appropriate speed at all times on Norton High Street and improve pedestrian safety. Traffic calming has been found to be particularly effective at reducing vehicle speeds, as well as the frequency and severity of accidents.

The proposed measures will bring further improvements to Norton to create more high quality, safe and accessible spaces for residents and visitors to enjoy.

### **Corporate Director of Community Services, Environment and Culture**

**Contact Officer** : **Ann McLone**  
**Telephone** : **01642 526772**  
**Email Address** : **ann.mclone@stockton.gov.uk**

### Environmental Implications

The measures proposed should ensure a safe and attractive environment for local residents.

### Community Safety Implications

Improved road safety for pedestrians.

Background Papers

Scheme of Delegation Technical Notes CSEC.17.2223 and CSEC.104.2223.

Norton High Steet improvement Scheme Summary of Findings -

[https://www.stockton.gov.uk/media/3303/Norton-High-Street-Consultation-summary-2022/pdf/Final\\_Norton\\_Summary\\_Document.pdf?m=637901999561270000](https://www.stockton.gov.uk/media/3303/Norton-High-Street-Consultation-summary-2022/pdf/Final_Norton_Summary_Document.pdf?m=637901999561270000)

Education Related Item?

No

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Norton North: Councillors Steve Nelson and Lisa Evans