

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Seven Dials Improvement Project – Consultation Results and Way Forward</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> January 2013</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Strategic Director Place</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Robin Reed</b>	<b>Tel: 293856</b>
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>St Peters &amp; North Laine, Regency, Preston Park, Goldsmid</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the outcome of the public consultation and agree a way forward for the Seven Dials Improvement Project.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Transport Committee notes the results of the public consultation exercise.
- 2.2 That, having taken into account the responses received, committee authorises officers to proceed with implementation of the revised Seven Dials Improvement Scheme as outlined in Appendix 4.
- 2.3 That the committee authorises officers to advertise a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for changes to loading bay provision in Dyke Road. This change is not an integral part of the scheme and therefore progression of the overall Seven Dials scheme is not dependent on this element.
- 2.4 That the committee agrees to monitor the impact on surrounding residential streets six months after scheme implementation, to ensure that traffic levels have not significantly increased as a direct result of the Seven Dials scheme. If it is discovered that traffic levels in residential streets have increased significantly, then residents in those streets affected would be consulted with a view to agreeing an acceptable solution. Funding from the 2014/15 Local Transport Plan Capital Budget would be set aside for any measures deemed necessary.

**3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:****Background Information**

- 3.1 Seven Dials roundabout is an irregularly shaped junction with seven arms, located on the boundary of several inner city Wards. The roundabout is a key traffic node, distributing high volumes of traffic during peak periods and accommodating approximately 26,000 vehicle movements per day. The junction also experiences relatively heavy pedestrian flows and is used by a modest number of cyclists currently. It is known to act as a barrier to further uptake of cycling, with many choosing to avoid the area in favour of quieter adjacent routes.
- 3.2 The immediate surrounding area functions as an important local shopping area with around 50 retail and other commercial premises situated immediately adjacent to the roundabout. The general quality of the urban environment can be described as fairly poor and the current layout and excessive amount of street clutter is considered to create a poor pedestrian environment.
- 3.3 The current layout has evolved over time and originally started out in the 1820's as a simple crossroads of two streets, Montpelier Road and Henfield Road (now Dyke Road). By 1856, all seven roads were in place but by 1904 the area had been converted to accommodate trams, which travelled between Preston Circus and the Brighton Borough boundary. By the 1920s, Semaphore traffic signals were introduced, with the signals operated by a policeman standing in a box in the centre of the junction. Trams were eventually replaced by trolley buses, which ceased running in 1959. By 1977, a new one-way system was introduced in the streets around the Seven Dials roundabout, the central roundabout was reduced in size and zebra crossings were replaced with pelican crossings.
- 3.4 As well as being a difficult area for pedestrians and cyclists to navigate, many motorists find the area confusing and perceive it to be dangerous, with multiple busy roads converging into a small roundabout area. In order to gain priority at the roundabout, more confident drivers tend to disregard the give way markings and move slowly onto the roundabout until a gap becomes available. Less confident drivers who are not familiar with the area can find it difficult to enter the roundabout, particularly at peak times, which can in turn cause delay.

### **Accident Statistics**

- 3.5 A total of 20 personal injury accidents were recorded within a 25m radius of the Seven Dials roundabout in the three year period October 2009 to October 2012, resulting in 23 casualties. The Seven Dials is consistently amongst the top five sites for highest collision record within the city. As would be expected where vulnerable users are encountered at an urban junction, the number of accidents is heavily weighted against non motorised users and the ratio of accidents involving cyclists, at over half, further highlights that roundabouts are not cycle-friendly junctions to negotiate.
- 3.6.1 Given the poor accident record at Seven Dials and the other issues identified in this section, the city council is keen to implement a scheme that will primarily address the road safety problem and also improve the area from the perspective of all users.

### **Initial Consultation Workshops**

- 3.7 To gain a better understanding of the public perception of Seven Dials, two initial consultation workshops were held on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2012. One workshop session was held in St Nicholas Church in Dyke Road, while the other was held outdoors on the Dials itself. The workshops were advertised via laminated posters placed in the local area and also in local community publications. Officers from the Council's road safety and transport planning teams were in attendance at each of the sessions. The event was also advertised on the Council's website and the online consultation portal was utilised to record comments from those who were unable to attend the workshops.
- 3.8 The format of the workshop sessions was fairly informal and people who attended were asked what they thought were the main issues at Seven Dials and also what things they would change. In total, 641 comments were made as part of this exercise and the table below shows the top 5 most frequent comments made.

**Table 3.1** – Feedback from initial workshop sessions (top 5 most frequently made comments)

<b>What would you like to change about the Seven Dials?</b>	
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Improve pedestrian crossings/make it easier to cross	85
Reduce speed limit	46
Make it greener/ more vegetation	41
Remove guardrailings	38
Increase the size of the roundabout	36

### **Stakeholder Group**

- 3.9 As part of the initial workshops, attendees were asked if they would like to participate in a stakeholder group that would meet in advance of the main public consultation. The main purpose of the group would be for stakeholders to disseminate information to local contacts relating to the project and the consultation, and also to comment on early proposals put forward by council officers.
- 3.10 10 local stakeholders were identified to take part in this group and two meetings were held in advance of the public consultation commencing. The stakeholders consisted of a broad range of local interest groups, with residents, businesses and the local church all represented.

### **Proposed Scheme for Seven Dials**

- 3.11 Given the poor recent accident record, the key objective of any improvement to the Seven Dials junction is to address the road safety problems that currently

exist, particularly for cyclists. Further aims are to improve the junction for all road users, and also to improve the quality of the urban realm.

3.12 In order to achieve the above aims, officers have conducted a comprehensive literature review of available evidence, both UK and continental, to design a scheme that will deliver the greatest benefit for all users whilst still retaining sufficient capacity for vehicular traffic.

3.13 The review of available evidence, along with feedback received through the initial consultation workshops, has been used to develop more detailed scheme proposals which formed the basis of the main public consultation. The proposals comprise the following key elements:

- An enlarged central island incorporating an over-run area for larger vehicles, creating a single circulatory lane of 5m in width. This will create a more controlled environment for vehicles and will reduce speeds on the roundabout itself.
- Replacement of the pelican (traffic light) crossings with raised zebra crossings to improve crossing times and responsiveness for pedestrians. Raised crossings will prove beneficial for disabled users or those with buggies.
- Reduction of the Dyke Road (North and South) approaches to single lane instead of the current two lane approaches on these arms. Research suggests that single lane approaches create a safer and more pleasant environment for cyclists, particularly those wishing to travel around the roundabout.
- Reallocation of redundant carriageway space to provide wider pavements, particularly in Dyke Road where the highest pedestrian flows exist.
- Removal of all pedestrian guardrailing to facilitate a wider range of pedestrian movement and to further increase the available footway space. Department for Transport (DfT) guidance states that 'there is no conclusive evidence that the inclusion of PGR at any type of pedestrian crossing or junction has any statistically significant effect on the safety record'
- Replacement of the existing inconsistent paving material with a new high quality product that is in keeping with the conservation area status of the local area.
- Optional changes to traffic flow in Bath Street and Vernon Terrace.

3.14 A copy of the consultation plan detailing the full proposals is included as Appendix 1.

## **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

### **Public Consultation Process**

4.1 The main public consultation lasted for a 4 week period, ending on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2012. Consultation postcards were mailed to 7,240 residential and business addresses within a defined area surrounding Seven Dials, informing local people

that the consultation was taking place and detailing how to get involved. In addition, information packs containing the consultation plans and copies of the questionnaire were hand delivered to the 50 or so business premises located on or adjacent to the Dials. Information was also sent to key stakeholders including the emergency services and public transport operators.

- 4.2 Four exhibitions were held during the consultation period; two on the Dials itself and two in St Lukes Church on Old Shoreham Road. BHCC staff were present for the duration of each event. The consultation was also advertised on BHCC's website, and through a double page spread in the Brighton Argus.
- 4.3 Questionnaires were available for people to complete at the exhibitions, and links to an on-line version of the questionnaire were also published on the consultation postcard, in the Argus, and on the council website's homepage. A freepost return address was provided on the paper version of the questionnaire.
- 4.4 A copy of the consultation postcard and questionnaire is included as Appendix 2.

### **Headline Results**

- 4.5 A total of 661 responses were collected, with 493 received online (75%) and 168 as survey forms returned by mail (25%). 84% of these respondents were local residents with 23% of respondents being those who travel through the area.
- 4.6 In response to question 1, 67% of respondents supported the proposed changes to the Seven Dials, as proposed in the consultation plans. Of the 33% of respondents who did not support the changes, the most common reason given was that the proposals would cause more congestion on the approaches to the roundabout and / or displace vehicles into residential streets.
- 4.7 In response to question 2, 48% of respondents were in favour of keeping Bath Street as a one-way street, with 45% indicating they would support the conversion to two-way traffic flow.
- 4.8 In response to question 3, 73% of respondents were in favour of retaining Vernon Terrace as a two-way street. Only 33% of respondents supported conversion to a one way (exit only) arrangement.
- 4.9 There was a particularly high response from the local business community, with 44 local business owners or managers returning questionnaires. 70.5% of businesses indicated support for the main roundabout proposals in response to question 1, suggesting that the business community is very supportive of the scheme overall.
- 4.9 A full analysis of the consultation results is included as Appendix 3.

### **Petitions**

- 4.10 One petition, signed by 1,385 people, was received from the North West Dials Community Association, a group newly formed during the consultation process. The petition requests the council to reject the proposals as they stand. The

petitioners oppose any scheme at the Dials which may lead to traffic being diverted onto residential streets.

- 4.11 It is acknowledged that the proposal to convert Vernon Terrace to one-way traffic flow may result in some reassignment of local traffic to alternative routes. Given the lack of public support for this proposal, it is not proposed to take this forward. Modelling undertaken on the remaining proposals indicates that capacity at the roundabout will not be significantly affected and therefore reassignment of traffic into local residential streets is not considered likely. Further discussion is included on this issue overleaf.

### **Additional Correspondence and Longer Responses**

- 4.12 A large amount of additional correspondence has been generated as part of this consultation exercise, with some being supportive of the proposals and others negative. Due to the amount received it is not possible to discuss these individually in this report but all comments made within correspondence have been included in the consultation analysis at Appendix 3.
- 4.13 Correspondence from key stakeholders and delivery partners has also been received. Those organisations who are supportive of the proposals include Sustrans, Bricycles (a local cycling group), the local Cyclists Touring Club (CTC) representatives, Brighton & Hove Friends of the Earth, and the Prestonville Community Association.
- 4.14 As well as the opposition from the North West Dials Community Association, The Montpelier and Clifton Hill Association have indicated they would be opposed to a scheme which caused any traffic to be diverted onto nearby residential roads. Correspondence has also been received from Brighton & Hove Bus Company who have expressed concern at a perceived reduction in capacity at the roundabout and the resultant delay to bus services this may cause. Similar correspondence has been received from Brighton Area Buswatch.
- 4.15 Local Emergency Services have been consulted and the Sussex Police Road Policing Unit have responded indicating that they have no objections to the main proposals but indicated support for conversion of Bath St to two way traffic and a preference to retain Vernon Terrace as two-way.

### **Summary and Discussion**

- 4.16 The results of the consultation suggest a clear majority of respondents are in favour of the main proposals for the Seven Dials area. The principal objections from those not in support of the proposals relate to a concern that the changes will cause more congestion on the approaches to the roundabout and therefore place more vehicles into residential streets. However, in reference to comments made previously in paragraph 4.11, the council does not believe that the proposals will reduce capacity at the roundabout to a significant degree to make rat-running a viable alternative to using the roundabout itself. In order to ensure this is the case, the proposals have been assessed using the specialist modelling tool ARCADY, which is used to assess the capacity of a roundabout both before and after changes are made. The results of the modelling show that all arms of

the roundabout will continue to operate below their theoretical maximum capacity following implementation.

- 4.17 Even with the proposed reduction from two lanes to one in Dyke Road (north), the results of the modelling suggest that the impact on capacity would be minimal, with only a modest increase in queue lengths evident in the AM and PM peak periods. This is because the current two lane approach only accommodates approximately 5-6 standard vehicle lengths, meaning the impact of removing the additional lane would be minimal. All other arms are predicted to show a reduction in queue lengths and delay and therefore any impact on journey times for buses and general traffic is also considered unlikely.
- 4.18 Traffic movements on the roundabout itself have been analysed and the principal concern of additional traffic in residential streets in the North West area (Addison Road, Melville Road and Highdown Road) is considered unfounded as demand for the original movement (i.e. traffic turning right at the roundabout from Dyke Road into Goldsmid Road) is very low, with an average of 37 vehicles per hour making this movement. Therefore, even if these routes were to become a viable alternative and a proportion of vehicles diverted, the total number of additional vehicles would not be significant.
- 4.19 Traffic levels in the residential streets surrounding Seven Dials have also been analysed using a series of 19 temporary Automatic Traffic Counters (ATC's). Data collected from these counters does not suggest a significant amount of traffic currently uses surrounding streets, with a maximum of 133 vehicles recorded using Addison Road (the road creating most concern amongst residents) in both directions during the busiest peak hour of 8am – 9am. In order to confirm traffic levels in residential streets have not increased disproportionately, this survey will be repeated post implementation and the results compared. Should it be discovered that traffic levels in surrounding roads have increased by a significant degree as a direct result of the Seven Dials improvements, then residents in those roads affected will be consulted and an appropriate solution agreed.
- 4.20 Having considered the negative response to the proposals to alter traffic flows in Vernon Terrace and Bath Street, it is not considered feasible to continue with these elements of the scheme. However, the design has been undertaken in such a way that the main roundabout proposals can proceed without these additional elements.
- 4.21 A plan showing the revised layout incorporating the changes described above and some additional minor comments made during the consultation process is included as Appendix 4.

## **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Capital: £200,000 has been set aside from within the 2012-13 LTP capital budget to fund the Seven Dials Roundabout Improvement Project. In addition, there have been indicative allocations of £300,000 and £50,000 from the LTP capital budget for the following two years.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Karen Brookshaw*

*Date: 05/12/12*

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The Council regulates traffic by means of orders made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Procedural regulations require public notice of orders to be given and any person may object to the making of an order. Any unresolved objections to an order must be considered by the Transport Committee before it can be made.
- 5.3 The Council is under a duty to exercise its powers under the Act secure the safe and convenient movement of traffic and the provision of adequate on and off-street parking facilities. It must also take into account any implications that orders would have for access to premises, local amenity, air quality, public transport provision and any other relevant matters.
- 5.4 In carrying out consultation the Council is under a general duty to ensure that any consultation is fair. This means that it must be carried out when proposals are being formulated, that adequate time and information about proposals must be given to consultees to ensure that they can provide a proper response, and that any consultation responses must be properly considered in reaching the decision.
- 5.5 The Council is under a legal duty as a public authority to consider the human rights implications of its actions. Parking and traffic restrictions have the potential to affect the right to respect for family and private life and the right to protection of property. These are qualified rights and therefore there can be interference with them where this is necessary, proportionate and for a legitimate aim.

*Lawyer Consulted:*

*Carl Hearsom*

*Date: 04/12/2012*

Equalities Implications:

- 5.6 The scheme will be designed in line with industry best practice and guidance to ensure all facilities are fully accessible to all members of society.
- 5.7 The proposals have been discussed with representatives of the Fed Centre for Independent Living and they consider the proposals to be of benefit to those of limited mobility, primarily due to the wider footways, the introduction of raised crossings and the removal of guardrailing.
- 5.8 There is some concern that the introduction of zebra crossings in place of the existing pelican crossings will result in disbenefit to blind or partially sighted pedestrians. The Council will work with the Fed to identify any partially sighted users of Seven Dials and will work with these users to ensure the changes are communicated effectively and alternative routes identified where necessary. However, it is considered that the simplification of traffic movements, reduction in vehicle speeds and widening of footways will also present significant benefits for partially sighted users of the area.



#### Sustainability Implications:

- 5.9 The measures outlined in this report will assist in meeting One Planet Living objectives by promoting and encouraging greater use of sustainable transport, and particularly overcome current barriers to walking and cycling.

#### Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.10 There are no Crime & Disorder implications arising directly as a result of this report.

#### Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.11 Longer term risks include the potential for the project costs to exceed the available budget and the risk of any identified enhancements having unforeseen negative consequences when implemented. The latter risk will be mitigated by a careful design and safety audit process in the first instance, and thorough consultation with end users.

#### Public Health Implications:

- 5.12 Increasing the number of pedestrians and cyclists will directly lead to improved public health through increasing the use of active modes and therefore the amount of exercise undertaken by local people. Reducing the number of people travelling by private vehicle will also lead to an improvement in air quality which in turn will improve public health.
- 5.13 Reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured in accidents involving road traffic presents an obvious improvement in public health.

#### Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.14 There are no citywide implications arising directly from this report.

### **6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

- 6.1 The consultation process outlined in this report has allowed for local people and key stakeholders to be fully engaged in the development of proposals for Seven Dials. It is considered therefore that the measures consulted on are those that best reflect the wishes of the local community as a whole and this is demonstrated by the high level of support as shown through the consultation.

### **7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 To formally acknowledge the positive outcome of the Seven Dials consultation and seek approval to proceed to scheme implementation.
- 7.2 To authorise advertising of the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for minor changes to loading bay provision in Dyke Road (north). This change is not an integral part of the scheme and therefore progression of the overall scheme is not dependant on this element.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Seven Dials consultation proposed layout
2. Seven Dials consultation postcard
3. Seven Dials consultation form
4. Full consultation results report
5. Revised layout showing scheme to be taken forward to implementation
6. Additional correspondence with blind & partially sighted groups

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

None

### **Background Documents**

None