

Eastern Area Planning Committee

5th February 2020

HI1129 Institute Road, Swanage – Footway Improvements

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr R Bryan, Highways, Travel and Environment

Local Councillor(s): Cllr G Suttle and Cllr W Trite

Executive Director: John Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

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Report Status: Public

Recommendation: That having considered the representations received, in response to public advertisement, that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to support the proposed changes to the Traffic Regulation Orders as advertised.

Reason for Recommendation: To enable the footway widening in Institute Road providing a safer environment for pedestrians. It is considered that the benefits of the scheme outweigh the potential impacts on local businesses, from reduced loading provision and on-street parking

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Institute Road is a one-way road which forms part of the main retail centre of the town and is the only vehicular access to the southern half of the town including the Harbour, Quay and Durlston Country Park as well as residential areas (see Appendix A).

- 1.2 The road is relatively narrow at 5m wide which is further exacerbated by a loading bay running the entire length of the eastern side of the road. This takes the usable road width to 2.5m which can be too narrow for larger vehicles trying to pass vehicles in the loading bay. As a result, vehicles mount the footway causing conflicts with pedestrians (see photograph Appendix B).
- 1.3 To improve the safety of pedestrians it is proposed to widen the footways on both sides of the road from between 1.3m and 1.8m to 2.5m (see Appendix C). To facilitate this the loading bay along the length of the road would have to be removed and repositioned, requiring changes to the Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) in the vicinity.
- 1.4 The proposals and changes to the TROs have the full support of the Town Council and Dorset Council Councillors.
- 1.5 Following the advertisement of a Public Notice in December 2019, to make the necessary TRO changes, this report considers the objections and representations received and whether the proposed TRO changes should be implemented as advertised (see Appendix D).

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The total cost of the scheme is estimated to be £450,000.00. The scheme is being part funded by Swanage Town Council (£100,000.00), Developer funding pooled from local Section 106 payments (£75,000.00), with the remainder of the funding (£275,000.00) from the Local Transport Plan (LTP).

3. Climate implications

- 3.1 Although any direct impacts on climate are difficult to measure the completed scheme will provide an improved street scene with less cars circulating to find [illegal] parking places in the long loading bay which would reduce emissions.

4. Other Implications

- 4.1 In terms of sustainability it is considered that the widening of the footways will remove potential conflicts between pedestrians and larger vehicles therefore making the environment safer and in turn improve the shopping experience.

- 4.2 The improved public realm should also help to encourage more journeys on foot with a generally more accessible environment.
- 4.3 It should be noted that there are several charity shops in Institute Road, and several have expressed concern that deliveries will be made more difficult without a loading bay directly in front of the shop. Whilst there will be a need to adjust how items, particularly heavy books, are delivered it should be noted that due to wide abuse of the existing loading bay there is never a guaranteed space to park.

5. Risk Assessment

- 5.1 Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW
Residual Risk: LOW

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment concluded that there will be positive impact on sectors of the community on the grounds of age, disability and pregnancy and maternity.
- 6.2 It also concluded that there will be no change/ or assessed significant impact on the remainder of the protected characteristic sectors.

7. Appendices

Appendix A – Institute Road, Location Plan

Appendix B – Photograph illustrating conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles, supplied by a member of the public.

Appendix C – Drawing HI1129-06-06-Orig, General Arrangement.
NOTE: To be printed and viewed at A1 size

Appendix D – Drawing HI1129-06-05-ORIG, Traffic Regulation Orders
NOTE: To be printed and viewed at A1 size

Appendix E – Table, Breakdown of Representations

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 Primary consultation responses from Swanage Town Council, Dorset Police and the local Dorset County Councillor(s), together with

responses to the Public Advert, are held on the HI1129 project file in the Place Directorate and are available to view on request.

9. HI1129 Institute Road, Swanage – Footway Improvements

- 9.1 Swanage is situated in the Isle of Purbeck approximately 16km south east of Wareham, with main access via the A351. It is a small seaside town with a population of approximately 9,800 looking eastwards across the English Channel towards the Isle of Wight. It is a popular holiday destination and base to explore the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. As such it is reported that the population almost doubles during the summer months.
- 9.2 Institute Road is situated in the heart of the old town and forms part of the main retail centre of the town. It is a one-way road, southbound, running parallel to the seafront about 45m distant. As the town has grown and changed over time and Institute Road is now the only main access to the southern half of the town, the Quay, harbour and popular Durlston Country Park situated on the cliffs to the south. See Appendix A.
- 9.3 The result is that all traffic entering Swanage wanting access to the south will have to go via Institute Road, this includes delivery lorries, buses/coaches and oil tankers, for example, as well as cars and vans.
- 9.4 In June 2015 a collision occurred in Institute Road where a car left the road hitting 4 people seriously injuring them. Vehicular access to the south of the town was closed for several hours while emergency services dealt with the incident. This focussed minds and the then Dorset County Council were engaged to look at potential options to improve safety.
- 9.5 It was clear that the busy nature and function of Institute Road along with high numbers of pedestrians on narrow footways was causing conflicts between pedestrians and vehicular traffic. This was a result of two main factors, the first the narrow nature of the footways and secondly a loading bay placed along the entire length of the road. When the bay is in use larger vehicles can only pass parked vehicles by mounting the footway (see Appendix B - photograph showing existing conflicts). Although there have been no recorded collisions citing this a causation factor, there are reports of many near misses, which from officer observation can be verified.

9.6 Plans were developed in close cooperation with the Town Council and were put on view during two rounds of public consultation in 2018. Where possible appropriate changes were made to accommodate suggestions.

9.7 To improve the safety of pedestrians it is proposed to widen the footways on both sides of the road. The footway widths vary but typically the proposals are:

Eastern side; widen from 1.8m to 2.5m

Western side; widen from 1.3m to 2.5m.

The western side is complicated by private strips of land fronting the shops which vary from approximately 0.9m to 1.5m, in addition to the 1.3m of highway footway. However, these strips are used for tables and chairs and items for sale during shop hours.

9.8 To facilitate this the loading bay would have to be removed and repositioned which has an impact on existing parking and loading Orders which will require changing. The proposed scheme and the proposed changes to the TROs are illustrated by the drawings referenced in Appendix C and Appendix D and should be viewed as A1 size printed drawings or as .pdf files.

9.9 In August 2019 the proposed changes to the TRO's were sent to the Primary Consultees (Town Council, Police and DC Cllrs) for comment. Full support was forthcoming and in December 2019 the proposals went to Public Notice and advertised in the local press. Street notices were also erected on-site.

9.10 Following the advertisement period and an additional working week to allow for the Christmas holiday a total of 9 representations were received. This breaks down to 5 representations making general comments and 4 relating to specific objections.

9.11 A table showing the form of the comments is included as Appendix E. It should be noted that the single referenced objections were made by one individual.

9.12 With the exception of objection a) below, which will be dealt with under the objections, all the general comments relate to either operational issues during the construction or issues not related to the TROs and have been addressed by officers.

9.13 Each of the objections raised as part of the representations read, in italics below, with officer comments after each bullet point.

- *Objection a) Will make running a business difficult in times of [online] competition*

Comment: This relates to two aspects of the scheme, firstly the construction period which will run from 10th February to the end of May 2020 when Institute Road will be largely closed to traffic. The businesses will be fully accessible to the public and will be signed as such during the construction. A dedicated liaison officer, with mobile telephone, has been assigned to the project to ensure businesses can receive deliveries and work with businesses to overcome any concerns on a day to day basis.

Secondly, once complete, loading in Institute Road will be restricted to the new loading bays proposed. Although this will mean some adjustment on how the businesses operate, in terms of deliveries, it is not felt a major block for businesses.

Online competition has been widely reported in the press and is not a factor influenced by the proposals.

- *Objection b) Removing ability to stop and unload could put people out of business*

Comment: As with a) above loading bays have been provided in the proposed scheme. The existing loading bay is 53m long and the proposed total length of the three new bays is 42m. This equates to approximately two HGV bays and one for a van or light vehicle.

- *Objection c) Removal of existing parking spaces on Station Road will reduce parking*

Comment: Depending on the size of vehicle approximately 5 spaces will be lost. This is necessary to keep the forward visibility of the Puffin crossing clear and uninterrupted. One new bay is proposed.

There is adequate short-stay parking in Station Road and the town has several large off-street car parks as well as on-street parking.

- *Objection d) Waste of tax-payers money*

Comment: This is subjective but the LTP funding is ring fenced for transport improvements and cannot be moved to other areas such as Social Care.

- *Objection e) Allow van-only loading in Institute Road*

Comment: This would be difficult to enforce considering the existing loading bay is widely abused by people using it for short-stay parking. It also does not solve the narrow footways and conflicts with vehicles. A large box van would present the same issues as a lorry parked in the loading bay.

- *Objection f) The change of taxi bay [one car parking space] to a loading bay will affect the livelihood of taxi drivers*

Comment: The taxi bay is proposed to be a loading bay during shop hours and a taxi bay evening and overnight. There is a large taxi bay at the railway station for waiting and adequate road space for picking up and dropping off within the town.

- *Objection g) No space for emergency services, service vehicles, removal vans etc.*

Comment: This relates to parking in Institute Road. Emergency services will try to get as close as safely possible to an incident, this would remain unchanged. Removal vans would have use of the proposed loading bays.

- *Objection h) Scaffolders won't have safe access to install/carry poles etc.*

Comment: As per b) contractors have access to the proposed new loading bays. It is not guaranteed that a space to unload would be available currently due to illegal parking.

- *Objection i) No clear path for emergency vehicles - too narrow*

Comment: The proposed width between the footways on both sides of the road varies between 3.4 and 3.6m wide. This will accommodate all emergency vehicles. Currently the road is approximately 5m wide with the

loading bay occupying over half the width – hence vehicles having to mount the footway.

It should be noted that, in relation to comment a) above, that officers are proposing to hold a meeting with the emergency services to discuss access requirements and set out an emergency plan in the event of an incident during the works.

- *Objection j) Traffic calming will create pollution and noise*

Comment: No traffic calming forms part of the current proposals. Raised crossings were originally proposed but removed on the advice of the Fire Service.

- *Objection k) Abuse of the existing loading bay will continue with new ones/lack of enforcement*

Comment: This is correct unless the levels of enforcement are increased.

- *Objection l) lack of consultation and/or updates*

Comment: There have been two public drop-in events. One during the concept stage where over 120 people attended and one during the development of the proposals, one covering a morning and an afternoon/evening the following day. Both events were well attended.

Several public meetings have been held at the Town Hall and visits were made to most of the businesses in Institute Road by the Mayor accompanied by an officer.

Officers also attended a meeting with the Swanage and District Chamber of Trade.

9.14 In considering the representations received it is felt that all reasonable efforts have been taken to reduce potential impacts on businesses during the scheme's development. The residual objections are not considered material to the scheme.

9.15 The proposal to widen the footways will remove potential conflicts between pedestrians and larger vehicles therefore making the environment safer and in turn improve the shopping experience. The

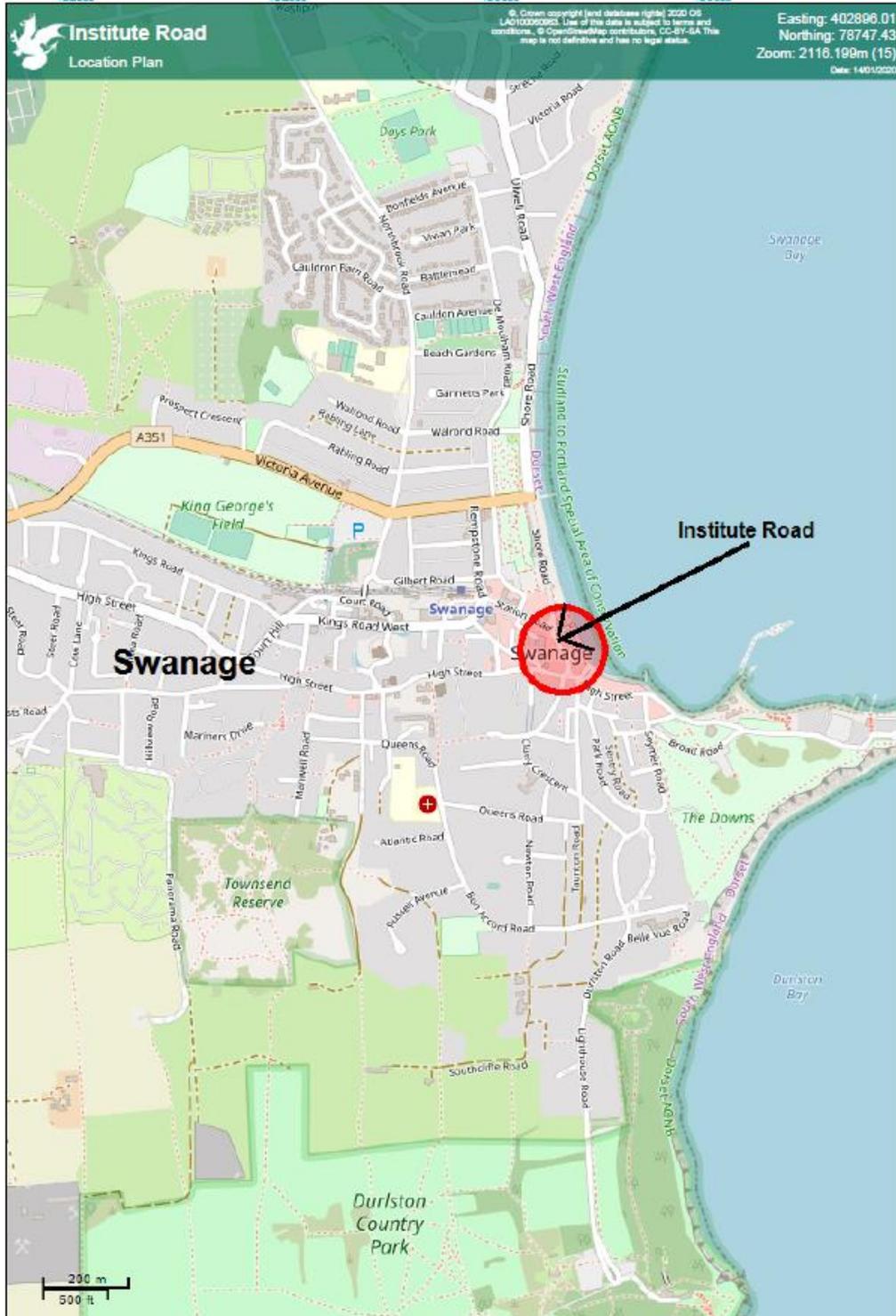
improved public realm should also help to encourage more journeys on foot with a generally more accessible environment. Officers consider these advantages outweigh any disbenefits in terms of a modest loss of loading bay and on street parking. As such it is recommended that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to support the proposed changes to the Traffic Regulation Orders as advertised.

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

Appendices

Appendix A – Location Plan



Appendix B – Photograph



Appendix E

Table – Breakdown of Representations

		Number of times referenced
Comments - 5 representations in total		
a	Back-up plan required for Emergency access (HMC and RNLI)	2
b	Suggesting reversal of Church Hill	1
c	Extent of private land incorrect on the plan	1
d	Private area is blocked off by barriers in the summer	1
e	How will refuse vehicles turn into Mt Pleasant Road if parking is allowed?	1
f	Unhappy with reversal (potentially permanent) of Kings Road East	1
Objections - 4 representations in total		
a	Will make running a business difficult in times of [online] competition	3
b	Removing ability to stop and unload could put people out of business	1
c	Removal of existing parking spaces on Station Road will reduce parking	1
d	Waste of tax-payers money	3
e	Allow van-only loading in bay	1
f	Change of taxi bay to loading bay will affect the livelihood of taxi drivers	1
g	No space for emergency services, service vehicles, removal vans etc.	1
h	Scaffolders won't have safe access to install/carry poles etc.	1
i	No clear path for emergency vehicles - too narrow	1

- j Traffic calming will create pollution and noise 1
- k Abuse of the existing loading bay will continue /lack of enforcement 1
- l lack of consultation and/or updates 1