

COUNCIL
6 DECEMBER 2017
BRIEFING NOTE

NOTICE OF MOTION RELATING TO THE BRIDGES GYRATORY SYSTEM

The works on the Bridges Gyratory System is now eventually finished, as far as Kent County Council is concerned. However for residents from the West of Maidstone, including Fant, Bridge, Heath, Allington and Barming Wards there has been a deterioration in traffic conditions. There are now longer delays for road traffic getting through the Broadway gyratory to the Bridges Gyratory. For Pedestrians with the closure of the Underpasses, except that to Medway Street access to the Town Centre has significantly deteriorated. For cyclists there is now only the Medway Street underpass which requires them to dismount on St Peters Bridge as there are no dropped curves. Overall therefore whilst the works may have improved access to through traffic on the East Bank, for those from the West Bank it is worse than before.

This Council resolves to:

1. Review the Gyratory system to see how remedial measures can be implemented to improve the access to the Town Centre from Pedestrians and Cyclists from the West of Town.
2. Review the timing of the traffic signals etc. to see if that can improve traffic circulation from the West of Maidstone to the Town Centre.
3. In particular at the main Pedestrian crossing from the Bazalgette Bridge to the bottom of the High Street look to see if a pedestrian phase can be introduced to allow pedestrians to cross both carriageways in one go.

Response to Council

The Maidstone Gyratory scheme involved the construction of two additional northbound lanes on Fairmeadow, alteration of the existing central islands and implementation of revised traffic signals with associated signage to negate the need for northbound traffic to transverse the two bridges and provide a more direct route for traffic.

The scheme also afforded the opportunity to improve the public realm at the lower High Street following the closure and filling of two subways, with alterations made to remedy the sloping gradient of pavement levels and pinch point on the footpath on the junction of Broadway Bridge and Bishops Way, improving accessibility for pedestrian users. Work is also currently underway to improve the drainage, lighting and general aesthetics of the Broadway subway to create a better environment for cyclists and other users. The tow path between the High Level Bridge and Medway Street subway has undergone significant work to improve accessibility along the river and resolve issues with the uneven pavement and is now open to the public use.

The following responds to the three actions proposed by Councillor Harper's motion to Council:

1. Surveys of the numbers of pedestrians and cyclists using the Bridges Gyratory system were carried out during the design process in order to assess the impact of the new arrangements. This included a calculation of the additional number of pedestrians who would use the 'at-grade' crossing from High Street to Broadway Bridge following the Stopping Up of the two subways. In addition growth in the number of pedestrians using this crossing was also factored in to ensure sufficient future capacity at the locations where pedestrians wait to use the crossing points. This design was subject to a Road Safety Audit.

It must be noted that the gyratory is not part of the designated cycle route. The signed route uses the remaining Medway Street subway. Additional signage for this route has been installed as part of the Gyratory scheme.

During the design stage consideration was also given to an 'at-grade' crossing on the western side of the Broadway Bridge to improve pedestrian and cycle travel from the St Peters Bridge to the High Street. Modelling work indicated that this would negate the benefits achieved through the main scheme works. Given that this is not possible and in order to improve access, improvements to the drainage and aesthetics in the Broadway subway are currently being undertaken.

2. The traffic signals are continually monitored by Kent County Council's Highway Management Centre (HMC) and adjustments are made where appropriate to the timings to optimise the flow when required. Post scheme monitoring is currently scheduled to be undertaken in February 2018 and will assess the baseline data used in the initial modelling against the recorded observed traffic timings and movements. Once this work is completed it is proposed to present the outcomes and recommendations for any changes needed to the Maidstone Joint Transport Board.
3. The traffic signal timings have been optimised based on the validation of the observed data (current flow of traffic in the new scheme); this includes the pedestrian phasing which maximises both the traffic and pedestrian flow.