

Green Paper

Traffic Strategy for Sandwich



Prepared by the Sandwich Town Team
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1. Purpose of this paper

This paper has been produced by the Sandwich Town Team (see section 3) with the aim of initiating development of a transport strategy for our historic town.

It contains a mix of specific proposals plus some that can only be firmed up after further research and discussion. This paper therefore represents first steps which are up for consultation, refinement and further development.

The chief initial audience will be the recently formed Sandwich Traffic Stakeholder Working Group. We owe a debt of thanks to Laura Sandys, recently retired MP, for setting up that group. It will comprise of key stakeholders including representatives of Sandwich Town Council, Dover District Council, Kent County Council, local business, Kent Police, English Heritage and possibly others. The group will be chaired by newly elected MP for Thanet South, Craig Mackinlay.

As part of the process, local businesses and residents will also be consulted.

Once converted into concrete proposals, they will need to win the formal assent of all three tiers of local government in order to be taken through to implementation.

2. Background and context

Despite being one of England's heritage jewels and packed with ancient buildings, Sandwich has been neglected over a number of years as far as traffic matters are concerned. The town suffers daily bombardment from large lorries, buses and other traffic, causing structural damage, nuisance and pollution while posing a constant menace to pedestrians and other road users. A determined and systematic effort to remedy these problems is urgent and overdue.

Sandwich is one of the original Cinque Ports. It boasts an impressive array of medieval buildings, set in a maze of narrow streets lined with thin pavements. The road pattern documented in the Domesday Book remains largely unchanged to this day.

The population of the Sandwich ward is just over 7,000 but this is set to grow by up to 1,000 with the addition of some 230 planned new dwellings within the Town boundary, plus another 500 in Discovery Park. Around 25% of residents are aged 65 or over, making it a comparatively elderly population relative both to the wider Dover district (20%) and to the UK as a whole (17%).

Sandwich is said to have the highest concentration of listed buildings per head of population in the UK. The whole of the central district is designated a conservation zone, where the overwhelming majority of buildings are Grade II listed for reasons of special historical or architectural interest. In theory, conservation zone status and listing should guarantee preservation of the town's character.

Strand Street reportedly contains one of the longest runs of timber-framed houses in the country. Many are of jettied design with their upper elevations overhanging the street. That makes them particularly vulnerable to hits by high vehicles. Furthermore the town's old houses have shallow foundations, which make them highly susceptible to vibration from heavy traffic.

Despite its unique features, no traffic management strategy exists for Sandwich. Other than weight limits on two weak bridges (which are widely flouted) it is perfectly legal for 40-tonne trucks and full-size buses to pound the narrow, winding streets. Articulated lorries frequently become jammed and bring the town to a halt. When the Police attend such incidents they are usually powerless to act owing to the laissez-faire traffic regime. Meanwhile buses, which are patently too long and tall for such roads, regularly mount pavements and strike buildings. Drivers do not generally stop to leave particulars and there is anecdotal evidence of incidents being denied. So, to add insult to residents, they are often left to argue the case with their own insurers or simply foot the repair bills themselves.

The A256 Sandwich by-pass opened in 1981. In principle it should siphon off almost all traffic that has no specific business in the town. However, with the development of dual carriage way either side of Sandwich, the by-pass remains as a single lane gap, causing a traffic bottleneck. As a result, increased traffic generated by major development in the area encourages motorists to use Sandwich as a "rat run". Signage on the bypass itself is no longer adequate, and, to compound the situation, many satnav systems direct lorries off the by-pass and through the town. Once in the tight central streets they find little room for manoeuvre, no scope to turn back, and some need to be extricated under Police supervision.

Two of the four approach roads are entirely without restriction, namely the Deal and Woodnesborough Roads. The Ash Road (from Canterbury) has a 7.5 tonne structural limit on the culvert bridge next to Gallows Field. The Ramsgate Road approach has a similar limit on the Toll Bridge. Stagecoach's double deck buses appear to be exempt. In any case, both limits are widely ignored and enforcement is non-

existent. Although technically able to prosecute offenders, the Police need actual evidence to do so and, in reality, their resources are too thinly spread.

Although KCC Highways nominally have a reporting procedure, it is ineffectual in terms of holding anyone to account and fundamentally flawed in that most drivers are actually committing no offence. Many incidents go unreported as there is no discernible point in reporting them either to the county council or the Police.



In a nutshell, “oversized” vehicles can enter and circulate the town almost with impunity.



An additional concern of residents is speeding traffic. As with large vehicles, the authorities show little appetite for enforcement.

Potential palliatives will therefore have to be based largely on self-enforcement. The proposals in this paper very much reflect that fact.

These problems sit in a wider context. Despite its fantastic assets and the valiant efforts of a few people to organise events, the town looks distinctly shabby. Among its less desirable aspects are an entirely hostile and dangerous pedestrian environment due to unrestricted traffic, traffic-generated damage to historic buildings, grime and pollution; inadequate space for parking; long-standing vacant properties in Strand Street, and under-exploited tourist potential.

Potentially beautiful, the town is in need of urgent regeneration together with more tangible evidence of civic pride.

3. The Sandwich Town Team

The Sandwich Town Team is a pressure group which campaigns on civic issues that are perceived to fall between the official cracks. Its principal areas of interest are environmental improvements that help to make the town a great place to live, to visit and to do business.

At its core are volunteers from several backgrounds including business, public service and local politics. Additionally the Town and District Councils have two standing slots at meetings for their official representatives. The Mayor also attends regularly.

The Team is taking the initiative on a traffic strategy with the knowledge of both local councils. However it is acting as a catalyst, without executive powers. Implementation of a new strategy will ultimately depend on securing the support, or

at least the compliance, of key stakeholders. It will also rightly require that due consultative processes have been observed.

The Town Team strongly believes that the current state of affairs should not be allowed to continue. It considers it irresponsible for a heritage gem to be routinely battered and abused, whether through neglect or claimed lack of funding. It regards it as dereliction of duty for the relevant organisations to await serious accidents before taking real notice of the situation. Similarly, whilst acknowledging the need for efficient logistical and public transport services, the Team does not believe that quality-of-life considerations should be sacrificed to commercial interests.

Last summer the Town Team organised a Lorry Watch which found that:

- 500 vehicles pass through or around the Town every hour.
- On average, one heavy vehicle (over 7.5 tonnes) travels through the town every 6.38 minutes, and
- Excluding buses and coaches, the average is one heavy vehicle every 14.4 minutes.
- Numerous dangerous incidents, speeding offences and breaches of the one-way system were also witnessed.

The results of Lorry Watch gave vital support to a campaign for traffic calming measures, some of which have been approved and are either implemented or planned. They are outlined in section 5.

More information on the Town Team's activities and constitution, and on the Lorry Watch initiative, may be found on the following website:

www.hellosandwich.uk/sandwich-town-team

4. Success criteria

A successful strategy will achieve the following:

- ✓ A vast reduction in the volume of heavy lorries and full-size buses in the old town conservation area with consequent improvements to:
 - Safety
 - Preservation of the town's character
 - Traffic flow
 - Cleanliness and air quality, and
 - The integrity of listed buildings.

- ✓ A pedestrian-friendly central stroll zone with particular benefit to parents with youngsters, elderly people, the disabled and tourists.
- ✓ Increased parking capacity, including better short-stay options, to accommodate population growth and simultaneously encourage more shoppers.
- ✓ Parking wardens and police employees trained to promote smooth traffic circulation, safe and considerate parking plus compliance with vehicle restrictions.
- ✓ All these objectives to be balanced against local business interests and public transport needs – with the overall goal of making Sandwich a more prosperous and pleasant place to run a business, live or visit.

5. Pipeline transport measures

The Town Team put forward an initial set of proposals last year. They were conditioned by a desire for quick wins that would set down some foundations for a longer term strategy. They are summarised in the table below.

Proposal	Status
Refreshment of white lines in the town centre.	Completed
New signage on the by-pass to discourage heavy vehicles.	In place.
Pair of traffic-calming tables on High Street.	Agreed and funded with implementation subject to formal public consultation.
Pair of traffic-calming tables on New Street.	Ditto
Pair of traffic-calming tables on Strand Street.	Possible structural objections. Different proposal put forward in this paper.
Pair of traffic-calming tables on Moat Sole.	An alternative proposal is put forward in this paper.
Re-phasing of traffic lights at the Toll Bridge.	Agreed. Work scheduling is awaited.

6. New Proposals

This section represents the main body of the paper. It contains brand new proposals to build on the measures already agreed. They focus heavily on measures that are self-enforcing, as this is the only pragmatic way forward.

6.1 Weight and delivery time restrictions

A 7.5 tonne limit should be imposed throughout the conservation area with exemption only for local deliveries between the hours of 7:00 and 10:00 a.m. By conservation area we mean the entire zone bounded by the old town walls.

Although this will allow businesses leeway during the delivery windows, the town centre is patently unsuited to large vehicles at all times. Pressure will therefore be brought to bear on businesses and hauliers to voluntarily restrict vehicles to 7.5 tonnes at all times.

Note: Refuse wagons and emergency service vehicles would be exempt. Certain other exceptions are envisaged on grant of temporary permits from Dover District Council or the Police, as the case may be; for example removal lorries and builders' trucks.

<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>
Goes a long way towards eliminating heavy lorries during a substantial proportion of the day and night.	Bound by legal requirements to allow exemptions; hence there could still be serious nuisance issues during the window.
Allows traders and tradespeople to continue without serious hindrance subject to better planning.	Enforcement difficulty.

6.2 Portals

Although most welcome, the new signs on the by-pass may not offer anything like a sufficient visual warning or deterrent. A significant volume of stray lorries might be anticipated because drivers have either missed the signs or discounted them as advisory. That raises the prospect of drivers being committed and unable to turn back once they arrive at the conservation zone boundary.

It is therefore crucial that vehicles exceeding 7.5 tonnes, which are travelling outside the delivery time slot, are turned back before they reach the town walls.

Providing turning points or exit routes within the town is not practical in terms of land availability and cost. Accordingly enhanced visual deterrents are needed at the outer entry points where escape routes are feasible. It is recommended that they take the form of “portals” with the following characteristics:

- Comprising tall palings and paired as sentinels either side of the road (they would have to be made of passively safe material to comply with regulations);
- Semi-triangular in shape, with their highest point at the kerb, tapering away from the road. The picture below shows an example elsewhere in Kent, although ours would be much larger and sited in pairs;
- In addition to “Welcome to Sandwich” they would bear large signs showing a crossed-through lorry and saying “7.5 tonne weight restriction ahead” or similar;
- Illuminated by night;
- Complemented by rumble strips; and
- Preceded by 7.5 tonne warning signs on the by-pass and on the Woodnesborough Road.



The four proposed sites are:

1. Immediately off the Deal Road roundabout, where drivers of prohibited vehicles would see the portal before exiting and be able to simply re-join the bypass.
2. Ash Road roundabout – ditto.

3. On the Ramsgate Road, immediately town-side of Sandwich Industrial Estate. Prohibited vehicles travelling towards town could divert into the industrial estate, where they are able to turn.
4. Woodnesborough Road, near Polders Gardens. A turning point might be feasible here and would be the preferred option. Otherwise the escape route would have to be towards the Co-Op, then doubling back from the Co-Op roundabout, which is not ideal.

<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>
Boosts other measures to help deter heavy vehicles from passing through, either unwittingly or deliberately.	Arguably less effective than pinch points plus turning areas (but a reasonable compromise).
Much cheaper than pinch points in tandem with turning areas.	

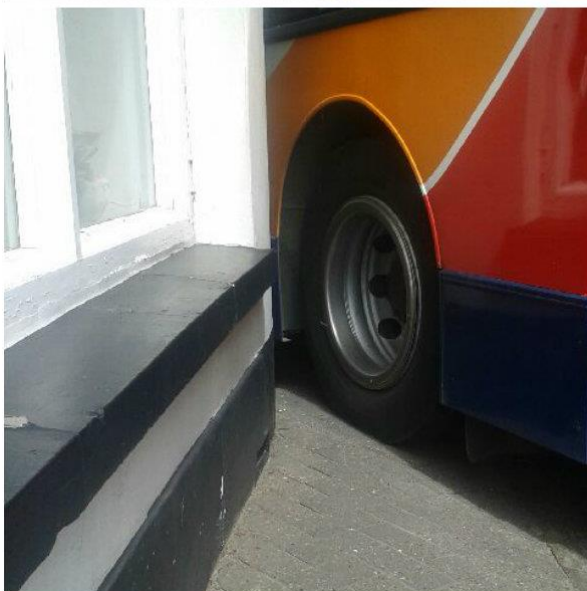
We would also welcome a review of speed limits on all the approach roads to Sandwich.

6.3 Buses

Buses are major contributors to the current nuisance, safety and structural problems, not to mention noise and air pollution. Both single and double deckers experience acute difficulty negotiating Breezy Corner. Most achieve the manoeuvre only by mounting the pavement, which they do every day without sanction. They also scrape or strike the Scrumalicious Cake Company shop quite frequently, plus nearby buildings less frequently.

Double deckers pose particular additional risks to the jettied houses on Strand Street and to the fabric of the Barbican toll gate. Whether single or double deck, the outcome includes financial consequence for householders/business owners, quite apart from the constant fear factor and the danger to pedestrians where pavements are narrow or non-existent.

According to hearsay, many of the buses deployed in Sandwich are relatively old, producing high emissions. Indeed the Town Team has plans to monitor air pollution in the town centre. This is a secondary factor though; size is the central issue.



The necessity for good public transport facilities is fully acknowledged, as is the need for convenient access for elderly or infirm people. It is therefore proposed that:

- A bus terminus-cum-coach park is created on the KCC Highways Depot site on Ash Road. (It is understood that there are plans to vacate and sell this site);
- Hopper buses run continuously from the new terminus/termini to circulate the town centre. Their price would be incorporated into the standard ticket.
- The terminus/termini to be used by both Stagecoach and tourist coach operators, with the result that all conventional buses and coaches will in future stay outside the conservation area.

- Scheduled buses and tourist coaches to therefore use the by-pass and enter Sandwich via the Ash Road. (School buses would also operate outside the conservation zone, as is largely the case at present.)

<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>
Reduced damage, nuisance and danger to pedestrians in the town centre.	While some people would choose to walk, elderly and less mobile people would generally have to add a short hopper ride onto their journey.
Hopper buses would give more passenger flexibility on pick-up and drop-off points.	Likely resistance from Stagecoach. However some aspects of current practice are demonstrably dangerous and potentially open to legal challenge.

6.4 Pinch points, obstacles and crossings

Closely related to 6.1, supplementary visual cues plus physical obstacles would considerably aid self-enforcement.

As previously stated, sets of speeding tables are already proposed for New Street, High Street, Strand Street and Moat Sole (though revised proposals are put forward in this paper for the last two). Their effect would be bolstered by adding pinch points at the first three locations. We believe these need be nothing more complex or expensive than large plant containers, strategically positioned.

It is further suggested that each table doubles as a pedestrian walkway in the interests of safety. We do not advocate full zebra crossing status, with flashing lights, but expect that some halfway house can be achieved at a modest cost.

A different approach is suggested for Strand Street and Moat Sole. These follow in 6.5 and 6.6.

The Town team also recommends the installation of steel bollards on both sides of the road at Breezy Corner: outside 45, 47 and 47a Strand Street to prevent buses and other long vehicles from mounting the pavement when turning left. There are several examples elsewhere in town. This simple expedient would afford much-needed protection to people on foot. At the same time it would minimise hits on the Grade II listed buildings situated there.

<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>
The tables themselves provide a tried and tested aid to self-enforcement. The additional accompanying measures will enhance their effectiveness.	Possible objections by residents.
Much-needed improvements to pedestrian safety and convenience.	Zebra crossings would be more effective but also much more costly.
Plant containers would add visual amenity to a relatively barren town centre.	Likely objections from Stagecoach and haulage companies
Bollards at Breezy Corner would help to protect pedestrians and buildings from vehicles.	

6.5. Strand Street

It seems likely that engineering and structural problems would rule out traffic tables of the sort to be introduced on High Street and New Street. But some measures are needed to slow down traffic passing along the stretch between Breezy Corner and the Bell Hotel. Strategically placed large plant containers might be part of the solution. Another innovative possibility of which the Town Team have only recently become aware is a stencilled surface layer resembling cobbles which could be applied to the existing road surface. This would provide a visual and auditory cue to drivers, highlighting the importance of Strand Street, and encouraging them to slow down. This material has apparently been used successfully in the High Street in Whitstable. We recommend that a feasibility assessment is carried out.

<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>
Avoids structural/engineering problems caused by uncertain foundations/cellars extending under the road	Not as effective at slowing traffic as humps or pedestrian crossings.
Relatively cheap solution	
Visually more pleasing/more in keeping with historic look of the street	

6.6 Moat Sole

Following on directly from the previous section, the Town Team wishes to change the parking restrictions on Moat Sole:

1. Removal of the current daytime parking ban, which is regulated by a yellow line on both sides of the road.
2. Substitution of free parking, either:
 - a) Alternated on both sides of the road so as to create chicanes, or
 - b) In a recessed or protected bay along one side of the road, as in nearby Littlebourne.

<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>
Creates additional parking capacity, free of charge.	Possibly increased risk of damage to cars from passing traffic.
The chicane effect would have the effect of slowing through-traffic and also carry a negligible implementation cost.	Higher implementation cost than chicane if fully engineered. However flower tubs or similar might provide a low-cost solution.
Bays would afford more protection.	

6.7 The inner Conservation Zone – pedestrian primacy.

This next proposal is intended to further the vital strategic objective of transforming the Town into an attractive and prosperous destination for both tourists and shoppers. The aim is to greatly restrict traffic in this zone and, by creating a “stroll zone”, make it a much more sympathetic environment for families, the elderly and disabled people.

The fine detail is a subject for further development through consultation and the application of specialist expertise. Nevertheless we have formulated the following proposal for serious consideration:

- No Name Street (at present subject to chaotic and dangerous traffic movement in all directions) would be closed permanently to traffic, creating an attractive pedestrian piazza;
- Vehicles wishing to turn in to the zone would have to turn right at the old East Kent Ticket Office/Ozzie’s Fish and Chip Shop into Delf Street, which would

remain one way, and therefore automatically restrict the size of vehicles entering Market Street;

- Market Street would become one-way, accessed by left turn from Delf Street and exited via The Butchery;
- The Butchery (one-way, as now);
- Potter Street to be closed to through-traffic by bollards at the Strand Street end, though still accessible for loading and unloading);
- King Street would be closed to vehicles between 10am and 4pm, with exemption only for emergency services. It too could be surfaced in the stencilled cobble material to set it apart.
- Austins Lane to be bollarded at the New Street end.

Delivery points:

- Short Street access unchanged, thereby facilitating a designated delivery point outside the Post Office on King Street;
- St Peters Street accessible as at present;
- Market Street – ditto;
- Formal recognition of the double loading bay on the Potter Street/Strand Street junction (both bays currently being marked but only one enforceable).

<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>
Creates a pedestrian friendly environment.	Possible objections from traders.
But still allows limited numbers of vehicles to access the zone – important for drop-offs, particularly for older/infirm people wishing to visit the shops.	
Ensures that businesses and residential properties continue to make/take deliveries without undue inconvenience.	
The pedestrianisation proposal goes little further than an extension to the current King Street system. This was initially opposed but is now generally held to be beneficial.	

6.8 Other road safety measures

Although outside the one-way system we also recommend the following:

- Bollards at the Harnet Street end of Guildcount Lane to reduce rat-running to and from the Infant School;
- A comprehensive review of signage and access on the narrow lanes between Strand Street and the Infant School; namely Paradise Row, Cottage Row, Church Street St Marys and Vicarage Lane.
- Introduction of a 20 mph limit on St Barts Road, for which application will be made in the very near future.

On a general note, all too many pedestrian safety and traffic flow issues are caused by sheer selfishness and lack of consideration by individual motorists. Some are regular offenders who appear confident of immunity from prosecution.

The present parking enforcement regime is largely ineffective because of the lack of Civil Enforcement Officers on the beat. And the absence of a police presence in the Town results in the blocking of access or through-ways and potential obstruction of emergency services going unchecked. Daily observation at the Infant School and adjacent to the bus terminus in front of the Guildhall are just two examples. Enforcement of both parking restrictions and deterrence to obstruct is key to implementing an effective traffic management regime. The Town Team hopes that Kent Police and DDC will open discussion on this issue in the light of this paper.

6.9 Additional car parking capacity.

The volume of traffic in Sandwich is set to grow substantially with the advent of new housing and planned retail developments. The pressure on car parking will similarly increase. We also hope that making the town a more attractive tourist and shopping destination will bring extra visitors. Adequate parking with appropriately pitched tariffs will be integral to that objective.

Parking charges have long been a bone of contention, especially with local traders. They consider them an inhibitor to shopping in the town, which is a serious worry given such alternatives as Westwood Cross with its comprehensive amenities and free parking. At the same time we are mindful of the importance of parking revenue to Dover District Council. DDC is conducting a strategic of parking across the

district and we hope that this will result in additional low charge, long term parking. We have two priority situations in mind:

- a) Market Street – where we will press for the first twenty minutes to be free of charge to accommodate minor errands, especially but not exclusively by older or infirm residents; and
- b) The Gazen Salts and Guildhall car parks, where free parking for the first 30 minutes would hugely ease the afternoon school run situation mentioned above.

Additionally, an obvious demand for extra capacity will result from population growth and, hopefully, visitor numbers. Some spaces have recently been lost to the Ramsgate Road improvement scheme. They were believed to be used primarily by people employed in, or visiting, the town centre.

Evidently this will necessitate at least one new car park. Two sites come immediately to mind.

- 1. One is Cow Leas Meadow. This site lies to the rear of the Malcolm Waite service station on New Street, near Rope Walk. It is understood to be owned by the Toll Bridge Fund, which would hopefully facilitate it being converted for the town’s benefit.

The site, being close to the mainline station, now with high speed trains, would help to augment the very limited amount of parking space in the station car park.

If this site proves feasible, we would envisage a footbridge being built over the stream, leading to Fellowship Walk and the Guildhall area, and a footpath leading to St Bart’s Road, for parents to park and take children safely to the Junior School.

- 2. Besides a bus terminus and coach park, the KCC Public Works Depot would be an ideal car park for cars.
- 3. Other options might open up during consultation, including in the Industrial Park, and at Discovery Park.

<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>
Revised charges plus additional parking spaces should stimulate extra footfall for retailers and other businesses.	Net reduction in council revenue unless counterbalanced elsewhere.

Provides extra capacity to accommodate population growth in the new developments. (This will inevitably place new demands on infrastructure, and not just car parking).	
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7. Feasibility

The Town Team members are acting as change agents rather than professional experts. While we have done our best to identify practical solutions, we recognise that there has to be wider input from a range of specialists to debate the proposals, to test feasibility and to explore additional options. Dover District Council and the Traffic Stakeholder Working Group will be important links in that process.

However, the status quo is not tenable and Sandwich's traffic issues have become not just urgent but also a matter of public embarrassment.

8. Funding

The cost of these proposals will obviously depend on which permutations go forward and on a whole range of practicalities. It could be substantial. But the Town Team have been very conscious of cost and sought to formulate economical solutions.

We currently have £55,000 allocated but unspent after allowing for installation of the High Street and New Street tables. Additional funding avenues could include any of the following:

- Development levies on new housing;
- Local authority funds;
- Central government;
- Charitable organisations/trusts;
- EU grants or funds; and
- Grants or sponsorships from private/commercial sources.

We will explore every possible funding avenue, using whatever talents and contacts we can access.

9. Management summary

- The paper's purpose is to initiate development of an overdue transport strategy for Sandwich. It will serve as the basis for consultation with key stakeholders.
- Sandwich is a historic gem with winding medieval streets and a wealth of Grade II listed properties. Despite its special heritage status, its streets are plagued with large vehicles that cause damage, danger, nuisance and pollution with barely any restriction or sanction.
- The town's retail and tourism potential are being held back by several factors. Among them are an unattractive parking offer and a hostile environment for pedestrians, particularly pram/pushchair users. These problems will be exacerbated by new developments and associated population growth.
- An initial batch of traffic management measures has previously been agreed, with others deferred. This green paper builds on those foundations to set out an integrated package that will transform Sandwich's chronic traffic situation.
- The specific new proposals are as follows. They focus wherever possible on self-enforcement because that is the only pragmatic way forward:
 - A 7.5 tonne weight limit throughout the conservation zone with exemptions only for bona fide deliveries within a restricted time window.
 - "Portals" at the four outer entry points to supplement new signage and discourage restricted vehicles from proceeding towards the town centre.
 - Creation of a bus and coach terminus to limit buses inside the conservation zone to hoppers only.
 - Introduction of pinch points, bollards and crossings at strategic locations.
 - Traffic calming on Strand Street by an innovative textured road surface layer
 - Traffic calming on Moat Sole via alternative parking configurations.
 - A detailed, comprehensive plan to restrict traffic and give priority to pedestrians in the inner Conservation Zone within the one way system.
 - A clamp-down on dangerous rat-running and unsafe or inconsiderate parking, principally by means of responsible enforcement.
 - Additional car parking provision plus general tariff review to accommodate population growth and encourage shoppers and visitors.
- While accepting that funding will present a challenge, the Town Team will explore every possible avenue.