

# SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Special Meeting of Sandbach Town Council held on 8 December 2003 in the Fred Flint Room, Westfields at 6.15 pm.

### PRESENT

Councillors: J M Keeling, Chairman  
Mrs M E Smith, Vice-Chairman  
Mrs D E Alcock  
Mrs P M Minshull  
Mrs P E M Price  
Mrs G M Thomas  
P J Darnes  
J Iddon  
B E Moran  
L Morris  
N T Price  
W W Scragg  
M R Sherman  
R W Sutton

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### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors: Mrs G M Thomas  
E A Lea  
D Lloyd-Griffiths  
J J Moore  
D Robinson

### 2. SANDBACH TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

The Chairman welcomed Mr John Gray, Mr Richard Chiverton and Mr D Wilkinson, Road Transport Engineers with Cheshire County Council at Backford Hall.

Members had submitted their questions prior to the meeting and the Officers had prepared detailed written answers in reply. The document is attached.

These minutes refer to points not included in the written answer.

Q2.1 Cllr Moran asked for a copy of the Safety Audit. Although it was not usual the Officers believed one could be made available. The Police had been asked to enforce the new parking arrangements and some progress had been made subject to limitations as a result of their limited resources.

Cllr J Iddon left the meeting after Q2.2.

Q2.3 The ambulance service had not given a written confirmation of acceptance of the Congleton Road traffic calming proposals.

Q4.2 Members did not agree that the Offley Road / Bradwall Road would be an unattractive alternative route to the calmed Congleton Road. Indeed, their

impression was that there was already an increase in traffic using Congleton Road / Bradwall Road and Chapel Street.

Q7 The arrangement for a drop off point for coaches was unsafe because passengers were required to step into passing traffic. They should alight onto a pedestrian area. The Town Council's preference was for the Military arms area to be continued to be used as the normal pick up and drop off point. The Officers agreed to reconsider this point.

Q12 The Town Council could not accept the officer's reluctance to change the lining at the Newcastle Road crossing although they welcomed the early adjustment of the light sequence. [Since the meeting Mr Chiverton has informed the Clerk that the outstanding signal work at the Old Mill Road / The Hill / High Street junction will be carried out on the 13th and 14th of December 2003.]

Q13.1 The meeting was told that Mr Spicer was recovering rapidly.

The Chairman thanked the officers for their detailed answers and for giving up their time to attend the meeting.

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm.

J M Keeling  
Chairman

Ref: TCMS081203

# **Sandbach Transportation Study**

## **Responses to Questions raised by Sandbach Town Council**

### **Sandbach Town Council Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> December 2003**

#### **Cllr N T Price**

Q1.1 The steering committee met from March 1998 for nearly 3 years can as many members of that committee as possible attend and give their reasons why they agreed to the present road structure?

A1.1 The Joint Members Steering Group first met on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1998, the final meeting of the steering group was held on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2001. The steering group was made up of County, Borough and Town Councillors, together with representatives of the Sandbach Chamber of Trade, Sandbach History Society, Cheshire Constabulary and the Congleton Cycle Forum. From October 1998 to June 2001 the Chairman was Cllr Lloyd-Griffiths with committee members Cllr Edwards, Cllr Flint, Cllr Morris, Cllr Moore, Cllr Iddon and Cllr Robinson. Following elections in 2001 Cllr Price became Chairman and the steering group members were Cllr Hemsley, Cllr Sutton, Cllr Edwards, Cllr Flint, Cllr Lloyd-Griffiths, Cllr Rigby, Cllr Moore, Cllr Iddon and Cllr Robinson.

Q1 .2 There are statutory legal requirements for consultation. Have the minimum taken place or have there been other meetings, before and since the work started?

A1 .2 There are statutory requirements regarding the advertisement of Traffic Regulation Orders and proposed traffic calming schemes involving the introduction of vertical deflection of the carriageway. These statutory requirements have been followed with regard to the Orders and traffic calming measures currently proposed. The Sandbach Transportation Study was the subject of public consultation between November 2000 and January 2001. This included an exhibition at Sandbach Library, a presentation to Sandbach Town Council, the production of a questionnaire and various articles in the local press. The Local Joint Highways and Transportation Committee for Congleton, at its meeting on 21 January 2002, resolved to support the proposals and recommendations of the study. In March 2002 the County Council's Environment Executive approved the proposals and policies set out within the Sandbach Transportation Study, whilst the Borough Council's Economic Development Executive approved the proposals and policies in February 2002. Approval to advertise the necessary Traffic Regulation Orders and traffic calming proposals has been given by the Local Joint Highways and Transportation Committee for Congleton.

Throughout this time County Council Officers have met on numerous occasions with representatives of local business, resident and Local Members to discuss the transportation study proposals. Officers also recently attended meetings of the Sandbach Chamber of Trade & Commerce in June and November 2003 to discuss all aspects of the transportation study proposals.

**Cllr M R Sherman**

- Q2.1 Phase 1 of the Transportation project has been completed and an audit taken place. What is the result of the audit? What remedial work is planned as a result? When will this take place and should not this happen before the start of phase 2?
- A2.1 The Safety Audit team raised a number of issues regarding the following: Visibility for drivers leaving parking bays and crossing the cycle lane, a section of guardrail is mounted incorrectly, some illuminated bollards have incorrect symbols on them (plain or keep left etc) and some signs are not lit. These are being considered and will be rectified if required at the earliest opportunity.
- Q2.2 The Market Square was initially part of phase 1. Should not this area take precedence over general work to be undertaken in the Commons / Congleton Road area?
- A2.2 The works being carried out within Sandbach are a single package of measures identified within the Sandbach Transportation Study. The phasing of the construction of these measures allows the construction works to be carried out within the specific budget constraints of the Cheshire County Council Local Transport Plan. Funding is allocated on a yearly basis and carrying forward funding into future years is not permitted. Therefore the package of measures must be structured to ensure each element can be delivered within its allocated financial year. The access control measures for Market Square were never given a higher priority than other elements of the transportation study proposals.
- Q2.3 Phase 2 has a budget set for it. How much will be spent? When will contracts with sub-contractors be agreed and signed? What penalties apply if the project is stopped / cancelled at any stage?
- A2.3 Phase 2 will be let under the Term Maintenance Contract to Jarvis. Work will start in early January. Completion was originally anticipated for the end of March but BT diversion work programming has meant that the work will now be completed at the end of April. The total scheme cost is approximately £170,000. This includes the Civil Engineering Works, BT diversions, Bus Shelters and design and supervision fees. If the scheme is cancelled then there will be the fees from BT, CCC fees have been incurred and there are cost implications in not being able to spend the

funds in this financial year.

Q2.4 What makes you think that the residents of Sandbach actually want you to start phase 2? Have you asked them in the last few months after the completion of phase 1? Do the emergency services accept speed humps in the route into and out of Sandbach? Have they stated their acceptance in writing? If so can we see a copy of this?

A2.4 The Sandbach Transportation Study was prepared through a Joint Members Steering Group make up of County, Borough and Town Council Members. These Members are elected to represent the residents and business owners of Sandbach. Their decisions and those of elected Members of both the County and Borough Councils determined the final recommendations of the transportation study. The County Council has received no letters from Sandbach residents requesting that work within Sandbach town centre cease. The emergency services have raised no objection to the proposed traffic calming of Congleton Road and County Council officers have liaised closely with representatives from Sandbach Fire and Ambulance Stations regarding the proposals. The proposals are for the introduction of two sets of speed cushions (not humps) and a raised crossing point at the existing pelican crossing on Congleton Road. The emergency services, buses and heavy goods vehicles more easily negotiate these measures than traditional road humps.

Q2.5 How long will phase 2 take to complete considering a start in the New Year?

A2.5 As stated previously, the scheme is due to start in early January and it should be complete at the end of April.

### **Cllr B E Moran**

Q3.1 What were the stated benefits for Phase 1 (a) to the residents and (b) for other bodies and (c) what problems were targeted to be overcome?

A3.1 The proposals and recommendations of the Sandbach Transportation Study are a package of measures designed to improve facilities for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport passengers, commercial traffic, shoppers, visitors and commuters. The aim is to create a safe and environmentally sustainable transport system offering a choice of transport modes.

Q3.2 What were the results of the Stage 3 Audit for Phase I, what residents' feedback was considered and what remedial action is now planned?

A3.2 The results of the Stage 3 Safety Audit have been discussed (Item 2.1). All residents are welcome to comment on schemes either directly to us

at Backford Hall or via the local Councillors be they Town, Borough or County Councillors.

- Q3.3 What are the stated benefits for Phased 2 (a) to the residents and (b) for other bodies and (c) what key problems will be overcome?
- A3.3 As stated in A3.1 the proposals are a package of measures for the town centre and their delivery only phased to comply with funding requirements of the Cheshire County Council Local Transport Plan.
- Q3.4 What is the status of the Phase 2 Improvements and what is the target completion date?
- A3.4 The Phase 2 work is due to be let as a workpackage to Cheshire County Council's Term Maintenance Contractor, Jarvis. The workpackage has been issued and also an Order has been sent to British Telecom for the diversion of some of their equipment in Congleton Road. Work is due to start on site in January and it should be complete in late April.
- Q3.5 In due course, how can the Borough and Town Councillors become involved in the Phase 2 Stage 3 Audit?
- A3.5 As mentioned previously, all residents and Councillors are welcome to comment on any scheme at any stage. The Safety Audit process however is a separate issue. This is carried out by a team of professionals that are trained to consider safety aspects of a scheme. They are chosen because of their expertise but also because they have no prior involvement in the scheme. Neither the scheme promoter, design engineer nor their immediate colleagues can be involved in the safety audit. The design engineer does however prepare what is called an "Exception Report" which goes back to the audit team with comments on the audit report.

### **Liberal Democrat Group**

Comments are made with reference to drawing DR/11940/50/02 D/B

#### **Q4 Proposed Speed Humps on Congleton Road**

- Q4.1 What is the evidence to suggest that vehicles are travelling at excessive speeds along this section of Congleton road, such that speed humps are considered necessary?
- A4.1 Excessive vehicle speed during the day above the current 30 mph speed limit on this section of Congleton road is not the issue. The Sandbach Transportation Study proposes the introduction of a 20 mph zone for Sandbach town centre. Before such a zone can be implemented measures must be in place to ensure vehicle speeds within the zone are already within the region of 20 mph. The 20mph zone and a possible vehicle weight restriction (except for access) are proposed to enhance

the environment of the town centre and discourage through traffic from entering the town centre.

Q4.2 This section of Congleton Road is currently wide with good visibility. Will it not be the case that the addition of the two sets of speed humps will cause motorists to seek alternative routes to avoid these obstructions, namely Offley Road and Bradwall Road that includes Infant and Junior Schools, contains more dwellings and in places is narrower than Congleton Road?

A4.2 The existing nature of the Offley Road / Bradwall Road route, together with the highway proposals associated with the redevelopment of Sandbach Cricket Club make this route unattractive as an alternative route through the town.

Q4.3 Is it not the case that Speed humps cause greater noise and Pollution from vehicles due to the need / likelihood of more braking and accelerating manoeuvres taking place?

A4.3 The introduction of the speed cushions may marginally increase traffic noise in the vicinity of the feature, but is unlikely to significantly increase pollution levels within the town. Due to the design and spacing of the proposed traffic calming features, vehicles travelling through this section of Congleton Road will drive at a constant low speed rather than accelerate and brake sharply between the features.

## **Q5 Mini Roundabout**

Q5.1 What is the purpose of the Mini Roundabout?

A5.1 The mini roundabout is designed to form a 'gateway' into the commercial heart of the town centre and would form the start of any future 20 mph zone. The roundabout will also aid traffic movements at the Congleton Road / The Commons junction. The mini roundabout has been designed in consultation with representatives of the fire and Ambulance Services.

Q5.2 In order to reduce traffic speed and provide a signal to drivers that they are entering a 20mph area, why has a wide speed ramp similar to that on the entrance to the High Street not been included adjacent to the site of the former petrol station?

A5.2 The junction of Congleton Road / The Commons (adjacent to the ambulance station) was considered the start of the commercial centre of the town and the optimum location to commence the proposed traffic calming and any future 20 mph zone. Traffic Calming regulation advise that schemes should commence with a speed reducing feature, such as a junction, rather than immediately commence with a speed hump or

cushion.

**Q6 Access to the Car Park, Scotch Common**

Q6.1 The plans show that there will be much greater restriction of entry and exit to this car park than at present. How much consideration has been given to the various users of this Car park in these plans, namely:

- The annual Fair
- The annual Sandbach Transport Festival
- The weekly market.

A6.1 In December 1998 the Town Council expressed concern over vehicles accessing / exiting from the car park across the footway to Congleton Road and suggested the use of bollards to define the proper point of access. The access to and from the Car Park is going to be restricted to defined entry and exit points, as indeed most car parks are. It is considered that stopping vehicular access directly between the Car Park and Congleton Road will remove a hazard particularly to pedestrians and cyclists. Although it will obviously also restrict potential vehicular movements not only to cars but also to other users including the Annual Fair, the Market and the Festival of Transport, Safety of pedestrians and cyclists must take priority but it is considered that the proposed layout will not rule out use of the car park to the above mentioned users. Congleton Borough Council staff have been consulted and they are involved with the Market Traders and the Annual Fair. Sandbach Festival of Transport are still to be consulted. Access to the car park during these events however is not considered to be a problem in that unrestricted access can be provided from 2 of the 3 sides of the car park during these times. The only restriction is between the Car Park and Congleton Road.

Q6.2 Will the proposed block paving, marked on the plan in green allow vehicle to access the Commons? If it is raised above the road surface at what height will it be?

A6.2 There will be a new footway between Congleton Road and the car park with no vehicular access to or from the car park. This will be at a standard kerb height of 115mm. It is intended to stop vehicle and pedestrian / cyclist conflict. The footway is for pedestrian use and the carriageway etc for car users.

**Q7 Coach Parking**

Q7.1 The space allocated for Coach parking appears to only be sufficient for two coaches. It is suggested that this is insufficient.

A7.1 The area allocated for coaches on the eastern side of The Commons is approximately 22m long. Depending on the length of the coaches using this facility it will cater for one, or possibly two, coaches at any one time.

The facility is only for picking up and dropping off however it is not for coaches to park in for long periods. Coaches will drop their passengers off returning later to pick up their passengers. This is similar to their current method of operation.

Q7.2 At present the Road space outside the Military Arms is used as a Coach Pick up and drop off point. It is suggested that this space should be reserved for this purpose.

A7.2 It is the intention that this area should be set aside for car parking. Coaches can use the area on the eastern side of The Commons as mentioned previously.

Q7.3 Will a full sized coach be able to turn right off the one-way system when a bus is parked at the bus stop on Congleton Road?

A7.3 The layout of the junction has been modified slightly with the junction being moved further away from Hightown. The Bus Stop on Congleton Road has been moved a similar short distance along Congleton Road. The situation as proposed will be no different than the existing situation. Vehicle templates have been used to check that buses can turn and these show that there will not be a problem.

Q8 **Bus Shelters**

To date no details of the proposed detailed designs / plans of the upgraded bus shelters have been issued. It is requested that these are made available for Town Councillors and public comment in the same way that any other building planning application is submitted.

A8 Proposed bus shelters will be as the Cheshire County Council standard Quality Bus Partnership type as supplied by Trueform. These are being installed on a Countywide basis. Bus Shelters do not need planning permission.

Q9 **Ornamental Bollards Outside The Town Hall**

Has consideration been made to the need for access to the Town Hall for the unloading and loading of equipment and the requirements of the Disability Discrimination act? It is observed that these bollards were not present in the original plans.

A9 Complaints have been received regarding the obstruction to pedestrians created by vehicles parking outside the Town Hall. It has been mentioned that these will restrict vehicular access to the Town Hall for loading and unloading. The requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act have been referred to. The area in front of the Town Hall is a pedestrian area that should not be used for parking of vehicles, for

loading or unloading or any other purpose. The safety of pedestrians is the important issue, particularly disabled and the elderly. A number of lockable/removal bollards will be installed which will allow service vehicles to access if absolutely necessary.

**Q10 High Town**

Why have the original plans for improvements in High Town been omitted and how and when was the decision to omit these changes taken?

A10 The only minor modifications to the proposals for Hightown from those on the consultation leaflet are with regard to footway widening at, and the repositioning of, the Hightown / Bradwall Road roundabout. Greater benefit is achieved by widening the existing footway outside No 1 Hightown, rather than outside 6 and 8, whilst the Congleton Borough Council Conservation Officer advised County Officers that the fountain on the roundabout was a listed structure and that planning approval would be required to move it. He advised the County Council that such a modest relocation of the fountain was of no consequence and requested that the proposal be withdrawn from the scheme.

**Q11 Other Changes to the plans?**

Are there any other changes to these plans and if so how have these been communicated to the people of Sandbach?

A11 Minor modifications to the proposals have been made with regard to the extent of the proposed One-Way Order on The Commons and the relocation of a proposed speed cushion to create a raised pedestrian crossing point at the existing pelican crossing on Congleton Road. Approval to advertise the Traffic Regulation Order and the traffic calming scheme as granted by the Local Joint Highways and Transportation Committee for Congleton and both have been formally advertised.

**Cllr R W Sutton**

Q.12 The Town Council has expressed its concern on several occasions about the safety of the Newcastle Road / Old Mill Road junction. What plans are in hand to improve the layout and modify the signalling?

A12 Cheshire County Council is pursuing the re-phasing of these signals to reduce delays to vehicles at the junction. There are some problems with the contractor and the equipment but this is being dealt with. Re-lining the junction so as to have only one lane straight on towards the Safeway roundabout has been considered but the consequential delay to traffic that occurs is unacceptable. With the present situation vehicles can enter the junction in two lanes on the green phase and then merge to one lane before the roundabout. Problems can occur but this is mainly due to poor driver behaviour. Re-lining the junction is not considered a

suitable option.

**Cllr E A Lea**

We will need plans not only of the Commons but the whole road structure around the town adequately displayed.

Q13.1 First of all, I am sure we'd all like an update on Roy Spicer's health.

A13.1 Verbal update will be given

Q13.2 What are the design criteria used for speed humps and how it is decided if humps are necessary?

A13.2 Powers to construct traffic calming measures are detailed in the Traffic Calming Act 1992 and the Highways Traffic Calming and Road Hump Regulations. Traffic Calming schemes, including speed cushions and speed humps can be installed for a number of reasons. They can be introduced to address a particular accident or speed issue or alternatively as part of a larger scheme, as here at Sandbach. In this case, there are traffic calming features in the High Street and on Congleton Road. These are generally in the form of speed cushions with gateway features at each end. These proposals were included to discourage drivers from travelling at excessive speeds, to improve the safety of pedestrians in the area and to allow consideration of a 20 mph zone for the town centre.

Q13.3 Why is the traffic flow worse since the introduction of traffic lights outside the MacDonalds junction?

AI 3.3 The limited site frontage available on Middlewich Road restricted the possibility of any local carriageway widening and ruled out the possibility of accessing the northern zones of the redeveloped site by either a roundabout or priority junction. Furthermore the desire to improve pedestrian and cycle links into the site lead to the conclusion that the only feasible access option at Middlewich Road was the introduction of a signal-controlled junction. The optimum location for this junction was opposite Chapel Street, in order that this existing priority junction could be incorporated within the proposed signal controlled layout, together with pedestrian and cycle facilities. The new junction introduces stop lines on Middlewich Road, where previously there were none, and therefore introduces some delay to through traffic where previously there was none. The County Council will monitor the operation of the traffic signal controlled junction that gives access to the site, following the opening of the health centre.

Q13.4 Have we got to wait for a fatality before the Newcastle Road / Old Mill lights are re-phased and the carriageway is re-marked?

A13.4 Cheshire County Council is pursuing the re-phasing of these signals to reduce delays to vehicles at the junction. There are some problems with the contractor and the equipment but this is being dealt with. Re-lining the junction so as to have only one lane straight on towards the Safeway roundabout has been considered but the consequential delay to traffic that occurs is unacceptable. With the present situation vehicles can enter the junction in two lanes on the green phase and then merge to one lane before the roundabout. Problems can occur but this is mainly due to poor driver behaviour. Re-lining the junction is not considered a suitable option.

Q13.5 Why have you refused to meet with us before and what has changed to bring about this meeting?

A13.5 County Council officers have never refused to meet the Town Council to discuss issues regarding the Sandbach Transportation Study. Unfortunately officers were unavailable to attend a meeting proposed for 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003 and immediately asked if an alternative meeting could be arranged on a date acceptable to all parties.

**Cllr Mrs P E M Price**

Q14.1 As the Sandbach Transportation Study seems to be causing a great deal of controversy could you please tell this council why and when was this study commissioned and who requested it?

A14.1 The Sandbach Transportation Study was commissioned in 1998 at the instruction of the County Council's Environment Committee Chairman who at that time was Cllr Lloyd-Griffiths. The study was commissioned to consider issues of accessibility and improve transport facilities within the town.

**Cllr J M Keeling**

Q15.1 The new 'Ashfields' Health Centre on the old E R F site will generate increased pedestrian movement wishing to cross Crewe Road. A pedestrian crossing will be required. What other highway changes are to be made to cater for this development?

AI 5.1 The site on Crewe Road, Sandbach is currently within the list of prioritised sites for pedestrian crossing facilities approved by the Highways & Transportation Local Joint Committee for Congleton. The prioritisation reflects current pedestrian volumes and the site is likely to rise within the list with the increased pedestrian activity associated with the health centre use. There are no further highway changes proposed in the vicinity of this development, however the County Council will monitor the operation of the traffic signal controlled junction that gives access to the site, following the opening of the health centre.