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## **NEPICAR LAY-BY, A20 LONDON ROAD, WROTHAM, TONBRIDGE - PROPOSED PROHIBITION OF MOTOR VEHICLES**

To: **Tonbridge and Malling Joint Transportation Board**

By: **Tim Read, Head of Transportation**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Electoral division: **Malling West**

Ward: **Wrotham, Ightham and Stansted Ward**

Date: **7<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

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**Summary:** **This report summarises the consultation outcomes of the proposed permanent prohibition of motor vehicles in Nepicar Lay-by off A20 London Road. This report also details the temporary arrangements to prohibit traffic in the lay-by, which have been in place since 2020.**

### **For Decision**

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#### **1.0 Introduction and background**

- 1.1 Following concerns about noise and anti-social behaviour in the Nepicar lay-by the decision was taken in 2020 to temporarily prohibit motor vehicles from accessing the lay-by. This was implemented by the Tonbridge and Malling Highway Operations Team via the experimental traffic regulation order (ETRO) process. The ETRO has been in place for over 18 months and as such a permanent TRO was advertised at the end of 2021. Two stop drivers from entering the lay-by a series of bollards have been installed along the length of London Road fronting the site, which can be seen in the image below.



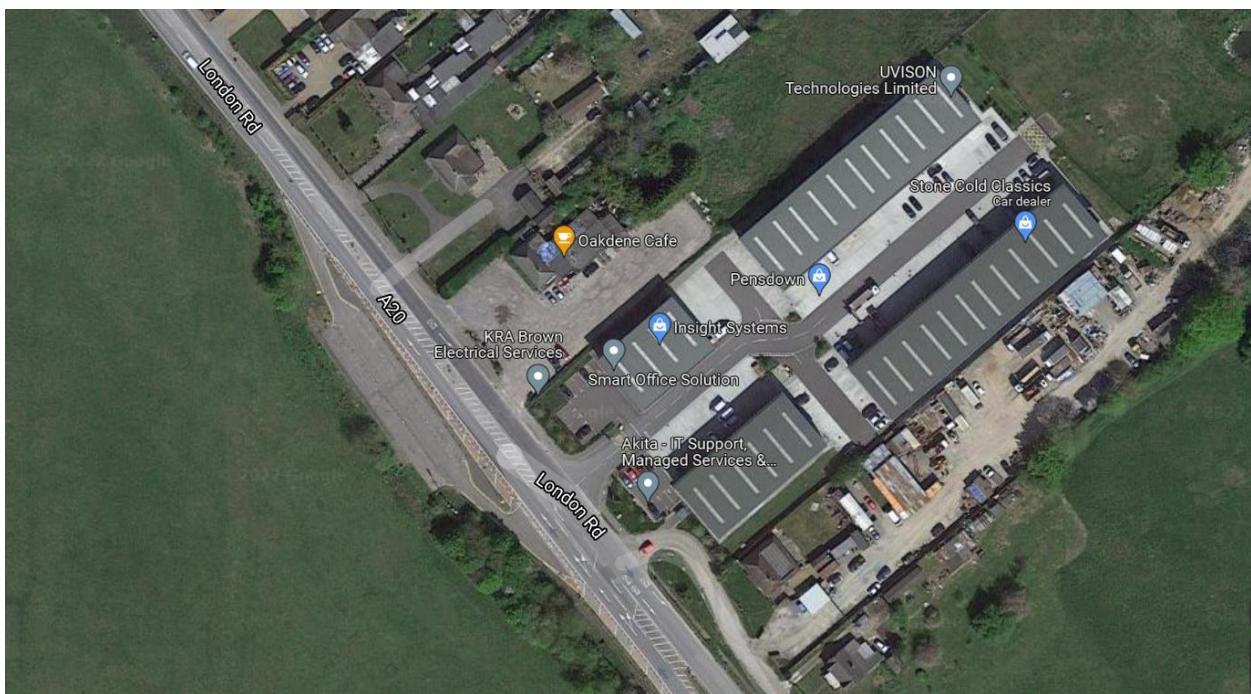
- 1.2 The lay-by is located on the western side of A20 London Road just north of the M26 junction 2a. The A20 at this location is rural open countryside on its western side and a mixture of residential and light industrial on the eastern side. There is an existing Shell petrol station approximately 150 metres north of the lay-by, and Wrotham village centre is located approximately 1.5km to the west. A map of the site can be seen below.



- 1.3 The area has previously had a large following of motorcyclists due to its proximity to the M26 and the presence of the Oakdene Café, a popular meeting point, which used to be located opposite the lay-by. The café closed, and was demolished last year, and when it closed, this did lead to an increase in the number of motorcyclists using the lay-by. Local residents and the parish council raised concerns about the large congregations of motorcyclists and highlighted highway safety fears about drivers performing 'stunts' on the A20 and within the lay-by which is publicly maintainable highway.
- 1.4 Throughout 2021 ongoing discussions have taken place with various departments within KCC, Kent Police and with the local KCC Member, Harry Raynor. Following the concerns raised Kent Police have carried out additional patrols in the area, particularly on Wednesdays when there is regular meetings, to discourage groups of motorists congregating in the area and this has proven to help reduce the issues raised by residents and elected officials in the area.
- 1.5 A planning application has recently been submitted to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC) planning for a motorway truck stop on the land located behind (to the west of) the lay-by. The application address is 'Land at Wrotham Water Farm Off London Road Wrotham' under planning reference 21/02648. The application can be viewed using the following link to TMBC planning portal (and inserting the planning reference number in the search bar): <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/planning-applications-appeals/planning-view-comment-planning-applications>. Should planning permission be issued then

this would require the lay-by to be amended and a new access arrangement to be formed into the development site from the public highway. The TRO for the prohibition of motor vehicles in the lay-by will have no bearing on the planning application and is being dealt with as a completely separate matter.

- 1.6 Even if a permanent TRO were to be installed in the lay-by prohibiting motor vehicles this would have to include exemptions for access to any approved accesses, and for maintenance purposes of both the lay-by and the various utilities located here. If any future approved developments propose to substantially alter the lay-by then the TRO will need to be revoked. Please see the aerial image below of the site.



### Crash Data

- 1.7 The crash data for this site has been analysed in detail and was reviewed again in February 2022 in preparation of this report. One serious crash was recorded in July 2018 just opposite the lay-by involving a single vehicle. There have been no other injury related crashes reported on London Road A20, between the M26 junction and south of the Shell garage, since July 2018. As such this site would not appear on the crash cluster analysis carried out annually by KCC highways, and there is no crash data to be reviewed to support highway changes in this location. It is worth noting that a small cluster of crashes was recorded further north. Directly outside the Shell garage 4 slight injury crashes were reported in the last 3 years. A crash remedial measures (CRM) scheme to enhance the signing and lining at the entrance to the garage was installed in 2021 in response to this cluster of crashes. Figures relating to crash data in Kent can be reviewed using the crashmap website: [www.crashmap.co.uk](http://www.crashmap.co.uk)

## **2.0 Consultation**

### **Experimental prohibition of motor vehicles**

- 2.1 As outlined above an initial experimental traffic regulation order (ETRO) to prohibit vehicles in the lay-by was introduced in March 2020 and was in place throughout the covid lockdown period(s) for the maximum 18 months that an experimental order can be in place, until September 2021. We had mixed responses to the environmental TRO which had to be abandoned as it was not sealed in time, this was due to lack of officer resources to carry out the works. We had received comments that the order was no longer needed as the antisocial behaviour had ceased following the work by Kent Police in the area. However, we also had comments asking for the TRO to be made permanent. With this in mind officers arranged for a second consultation to ascertain if the order should be installed on a permanent basis, or if the lay-by should be re-opened to vehicular traffic.

### **Permanent prohibition of motor vehicles**

- 2.2 A formal public consultation to make the prohibition of motor vehicles in the Nepicar lay-by permanent was advertised between 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021. A copy of the consultation documentation can be viewed in Appendix 1. The consultation was sent to all statutory consultees including emergency service providers and the elected TMBC and KCC councillors for the area. Notices were erected on site and all consultation documents uploaded to the KCC website, at the following link: <https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/london-road-wrotham-layby>
- 2.3 There was a total of 22 responses to the consultation, with 15 of those objecting to the proposals, and 7 in support.

Support	Object	Total
7	15	22

- 2.4 Reasons for objecting included concerns that the loss of the lay-by removes a safe location for motorists to stop and rest, in a location close to both the M26 and the M20. Some of the respondents mention anti-driver (and anti-lorry) ideologies, and concerns that there is a notable shortage of lorry parking in Kent. There was also of number of objections regarding the purpose of closing the lay-by, it was felt that closing a facility on the public highway due to anti-social behaviour was not a suitable solution to the problem and that this could be better solved through other means such as increased police presence.
- 2.5 Comments in support of the scheme were that the closure of the lay-by has stopped the anti-social behaviour, some residents noted that prior to the closure there were regularly accumulations of motorcyclists in the area. Supporters for the closure also mention that the lay-by was often being used for racing and dangerous driving within the lay-by itself and along the A20.

Some respondents also expressed that it is important to keep lorries out of residential areas.

- 2.6 Lack of lorry parking in the area, and in wider parts of Kent was a one of the most frequent comments raised.
- 2.7 Wrotham Parish Council strongly support the proposals to prohibit traffic from using the lay-by.
- 2.8 A copy of the anonymised consultation responses can be viewed in appendix 2.

### **3.0 Discussion and member comments**

- 3.1 The KCC Member for the area, Harry Raynor, has met with officers on various occasions to discuss concerns about anti-social behaviour at the site and has relayed the parish councils wish for the lay-by to be closed. The last meeting took place on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2021. Officers were made aware that the parish council have expressed an intention to have the lay-by stopped up and that the parish council can then take on maintenance of the area as a parish green, or similar. To date, officers are not aware that any stopping up application has been submitted.
- 3.2 KCC officers from the Schemes, Planning and Delivery (SPD) Team have reviewed the proposals in detail and do not have a strong view either way regarding whether the lay-by should be closed to vehicular traffic permanently. The anti-social behaviour has reduced / improved, it is not possible to determine how much of this has been due to the closure of the lay-by and / or the additional police presence in the area. This may also be partly due to the closure of the Oakdene Café.
- 3.3 The reflective bollards currently on site were installed by the KCC Highway Operations Team. There is no dedicated budget for any additional works at this site. If the prohibition of motor vehicles were to be made permanent, then the SPD team will seek funding to install permanent signage to highlight this. Any further engineering works would need to be subject to a detailed funding bid.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

- 4.1 As outlined above the prohibition of motor vehicles proposal was driven by requests from local residents and elected officials to address concerns about highway safety and anti-social behaviour in and near the lay-by. Based on the consultation feedback and officers' analysis of the site there is not a strong case either way to make the prohibition permanent or to remove it. However, there were a greater number of objections to making the closure of the lay-by permanent, than there was support. KCC have not identified a budget to carry out any additional works at this location. It is recommended that all those who have interest in this site ensure they comment on the planning application

currently being considered at TMBC planning as this does propose substantial alterations to the road layout including the removal of the existing lay-by.

## **5.0 Recommendation**

- 5.1 That the proposed prohibition of motor vehicles TRO be abandoned and that the accesses be re-opened to vehicular traffic.

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## ***Appendices***

Appendix 1 – Permanent Prohibition of Motor Vehicles consultation documents

Appendix 2 – Anonymised consultation responses