

Meeting: Traffic Regulations Working Party &
Cabinet Committee
Date: Wednesday 17 January 2024
Classification: Part 1
Key Decision: No
Title of Report: **Kent Elms Merge Lane Amendments**

Executive Director: Alan Richards - Executive Director (Environment & Place)
Report Author: Ed Brown - Senior Engineer, Highways & Coastal
Executive Councillor: Councillor Kevin Buck – Cabinet Member for Highways,
Transport & Parking

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Traffic Regulations Working Party and Cabinet Committee of the request from ward councillors received in June 2023 supporting making amendments to the A127 Kent Elms junction.
- 1.2. The request is that lane 1 of the eastbound A127 carriageway is made into a left turn only lane (see Plan attached at Appendix 1).
- 1.3. The recommendation is to proceed with construction of the proposals.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet Committee:

- 2.1. **Agree to the proposals, set out at paragraph 3.6 below, in their entirety and give authority to proceed with the issue of an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order and the installation and construction works required.**

3. Background

- 3.1. In 2017 works to improve the A127 Kent Elms junction were completed. Works consisted of adding an additional lane to both the east and westbound carriageways to provide improved capacity through the junction.
- 3.2. The scheme also included the removal of a non-Equalities Act 2010 compliant footbridge and the construction of a compliant footbridge.
- 3.3. To the north of the A127 a shared use cycleway was introduced to improve pedestrian and cycle movements through the junction.

- 3.4. Since the completion of the scheme the length of the merge lane has been questioned. In 2023, a request was received by the ward councillors that the Council make amendments to the junction as it was perceived that the merge lane on the eastbound carriageway was creating a risk of collisions.
- 3.5. In addition, a number of vehicles have been observed by officers contravening the no 'U-turn' traffic order from the A127 eastbound to westbound carriageways at the Kent Elms junction.
- 3.6. It is proposed to undertake the following action, installations and works to the eastbound carriageway:
- Make an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order changing lane 1 of the eastbound approach to left turn only.
 - Install Greenwich WandOrca between lane 1 and lane 2 on the eastbound approach to the junction.
 - Install additional 'wicket' type signs on the eastbound approach to the junction.
 - On the eastbound carriageway install a temporary kerb line in lane 1 to the west of the junction and extend the existing traffic island on Rayleigh Road.
 - Extend the existing central island on the right turn lane into Bridgwater Drive.

4. Reasons for Decisions

- 4.1. Introducing a left turn only traffic order in lane 1 will result in only 2 lanes proceeding through the junction therefore removing the merge section.
- 4.2. Installing 54m of Greenwich WandOrca (vertical 'wands' with reflective markings) between lanes 1 & 2 on the approach to the junction will prevent motorists from changing lane in close proximity of the junction reducing the risk of collisions.
- 4.3. The installation of 'wicket' style signs on the near side verge and central reserve will give motorists advance warning of the change to the road layout.
- 4.4. Installation of temporary kerbing on the Rayleigh Road traffic island and in lane 1 to the west of the junction will prevent motorists from proceeding ahead to support compliance with the experimental left turn only traffic order.
- 4.5. Extending the central island at the right turn lane into Bridgwater Drive will make it more difficult to make illegal movements and increase compliance.

5. Other Options

- 5.1. 'Do nothing' and retain the existing arrangement.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. The cost of the works will be covered by the 2023/24 capital budget for minor road safety schemes. The cost of completing the works is estimated at £150k.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 If Cabinet Committee agrees to make an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order, it can only remain in force for a maximum of 18 months and this must be made *for the purposes of carrying out an experimental scheme of traffic control (section 9(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984)*. An Experimental Traffic Regulation Order can be made at relatively short notice where existing restrictions are not working or the traffic authority wants to examine how different restrictions would address an issue. There must be a genuine experiment being conducted.
- 7.2 The provisions of regulations 7 (*publication of proposals*) and 8 (*objections*) of the Local Authority Traffic Orders (Procedure)(England & Wales) Regulations 1996 shall not apply to an experimental order (regulation 22(1)). An Experimental Traffic Regulation Order can come into force after seven days have elapsed since the publication of the notice of making it (*regulation 22(2)*)
- 7.3 While the traffic authority must consult relevant parties under regulation 6, it does not need to invite objections or representations from any person under regulation 8 before making the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order. Formal objections to the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order being made permanent can be made during the first 6 months of the Order coming into force. This allows the experimental order to be in force while the consultation is ongoing.
- 7.4 After an experimental order has been made, the notice of making it must be published (*regulation 17*).
- 7.5 The deposited documents (in Schedule 2 of the 1996 Regulations) must be made available for public inspection.
- 7.6 The statement of reasons must include the *reasons for proceeding by way of an experiment* and state whether the traffic authority intends to consider making an order with the same effect that is not an experimental order.
- 7.7 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 imposes the public sector equality duty (PSED) on public authorities in the exercise of their functions, including traffic authorities under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.
- 7.8 Providing certain procedural requirements are met, a traffic authority can make an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order permanent. A decision to make it permanent or to remove it will need to be made before the end of the 18-month period.

8. Policy Context

- 8.1. The Council will continue to monitor the use of the highway to ensure it has a good understanding of the demands and issues placed on the network. Experimental safety improvements at this junction, in line with the Local Transport Plan (LTP3) Policy 18, will be monitored ensuring that the accessibility of the highway network is maximised.

9. Carbon Impact

- 9.1. The scheme, if progressed, might lead to reduced air quality, this should be offset against the improvement to road safety.

10. Equalities

- 10.1. An Equalities Impact Assessment Has been carried out that revealed no adverse impacts. This will be monitored over the ETRO period to ensure that this remains the case.

11. Consultation

- 11.1. This will be carried out in accordance with the relevant legislation.

12. Appendices

- 12.1. Plan showing proposed changes

13. Report Authorisation

This report has been approved for publication by:		
	Name:	Date:
S151 Officer	Joe Chesterton	
Deputy Monitoring Officer	Laurie Gibbins	09 Jan 24
Executive Director(s)	Alan Richards	19 Dec 23
Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Councillor Kevin Buck	20 Dec 23