

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 25 April 2023

BY: Executive Director for Place

SUBJECT: North Berwick High Street: Safety and Access

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Council on the outcome of the public consultation and design optioneering to mitigate concerns about safety and equality of access for users of High Street, North Berwick.
- 1.2 The report seeks Council approval of the preferred option and authority to move forward to technical design and construction.
- 1.3 In addition, the report seeks Council approval of the statutory procedures necessary to make a Traffic Regulation Order to prohibit parking within the defined area with the exception of loading/unloading and drop-off and pick-up for disabled users.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Council notes the content of the report.
- 2.2 That Council approves the recommendation of the preferred option, as set out in Section 3.17 of the report and shown at Appendices B and C.
- 2.3 That Council approves the statutory procedure necessary to make a Traffic Regulation Order in accordance with the relevant legislation in respect of the location listed in Appendix A.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 East Lothian Council, as the Local Traffic Authority, is responsible for the making of Traffic Regulation Orders to aid free unrestricted movement on the road, to prevent inappropriate use of the road, to improve the amenity of the area and to improve safety for all users of the road.

- 3.2 North Berwick is a popular coastal resort which is frequently listed as one of the best visitor locations in Scotland and the wider United Kingdom. The High Street is a vibrant area with narrow pavements which are, in many places between Quality Street and Market Place, only one metre wide.
- 3.3 Long-standing engagement with the community going back at least 60 years has highlighted concerns and issues over road safety for pedestrians and cyclists and equality of access for people with impaired mobility.
- 3.4 Community engagement has also highlighted that the increasing volume of motorised traffic is dominating accessibility to the detriment of pedestrians and cyclists.
- 3.5 East Lothian Council engaged an independent consultant to build on the work of previous studies including the 2017 North Berwick Charrette to propose a design for changes to the road layout to create a safer, more accessible and more attractive High Street that meets the needs of all users and businesses by providing quality infrastructure and placemaking.
- 3.6 The full consultant's report with appendices has been lodged in the Members' Library (Ref: 33/23, April 2023 Bulletin).
- 3.7 Safety is a paramount concern due to the current road layout.
- 3.8 The proposed design is required to sit within the context of both National and Local Transport Strategies to reallocate road space in favour of active travel users and away from motorised traffic.
- 3.9 The consultant's brief was that the final design should provide benefits by prioritising walking, wheeling (wheelchairs, prams etc.) and cycling for everyday journeys and leisure trips while retaining access to the businesses on the High Street, allowing for loading and unloading and, thus, creating a more pleasant, safer environment.
- 3.10 A number of case studies were carried out on high streets in Scotland that had undergone or planned to implement improvement works to increase accessibility and improve the pedestrian experience. These found a significant body of evidence that improving the environment of high streets for people walking, wheeling and cycling improves accessibility and health, reduces pollution and can boost footfall and trading for businesses (Section 3 of the consultants' report).

A comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement exercise was undertaken which included an online survey, a public event held at the church hall on the High Street, a walk-through event where stakeholders physically walked through the proposals, internal and external stakeholder workshops, workshops with groups representing equalities and disability groups, circulations on the Council's website and a dedicated email address and phone number for direct enquiries (Section 4 of the consultants' report).

- 3.11 In total there were 1,553 responses to the survey.

- 3.12 47% stated that they felt unsafe or very unsafe while using the High Street while 30% stated that they felt safe or very safe.
- 3.13 When asked about support for changes to the High Street to improve safety and accessibility, 65% supported or strongly supported changes while 16% opposed or strongly opposed changes.
- 3.14 When asked about specific design elements there was strong support for restricting the size of vehicles, changes to the footway to provide more space for walkers and wheelers, gateway features to restrict vehicle speeds and improved signage of walking routes to nearby car parks.
- 3.15 The consultants were set design parameters for a new layout. These included retention of loading / servicing for businesses; minimum footway width of 1.5m (based on engagement with wheelchair users); minimum carriageway width of 3.7m (required for fire service appliances); 60mm kerb height (based on engagement with visually impaired users) and improved footway surface;
- 3.16 A number of options were considered and a full option appraisal was carried out whereby options were scored against criteria which included safety, accessibility, socio-economic, deliverability and maintainability (Section 5 of the consultants' report).
- 3.17 The results indicated that the option for a 3.7m wide road with 60mm kerbs and dedicated areas for loading / unloading and for drop-off / pick-up for blue badge holders represented the greatest overall improvement when scored against a range of objectives and it is recommended that this option is taken forward.
- 3.18 If approved the delivery of the preferred option will require the initiation of the statutory procedure to introduce the Traffic Regulation Order. This is set out in Appendix A.
- 3.19 A plan of the layout of the preferred option is included at Appendix B and visualisations of this at Appendix C.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 These proposals will contribute towards fulfilling the East Lothian Plan 2017-2027, in particular:
- Outcome 2.1: "East Lothian has strong resilient communities where people respect and support each other" and
 - Action (k) "we will make our roads safer, including a focus on making journeys safer for cyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities"

4.2 The proposed changes will promote and support safe, inclusive, active and sustainable travel in line with the following policies:

- National Transport Strategy
- Local Transport Strategy
- Climate Change Strategy

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 The subject of this report has been through the Integrated Impact Assessment process and no negative impacts have been identified. The assessment can be found in Appendix D of the consultants' report. The IIA has been published on the Council website and can be found via the below link.

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/13712/integrated_impact_assessment_iaa_-_north_berwick_high_street_study

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial – if approved, external funding will be investigated to support delivery of the scheme

6.2 Personnel - a project manager (funded by external award) will be required to take an overview of the project.

6.3 Other - none

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Consultant's Report on North Berwick High Street Design Options (Ref: 33/23, April 2023 Bulletin)

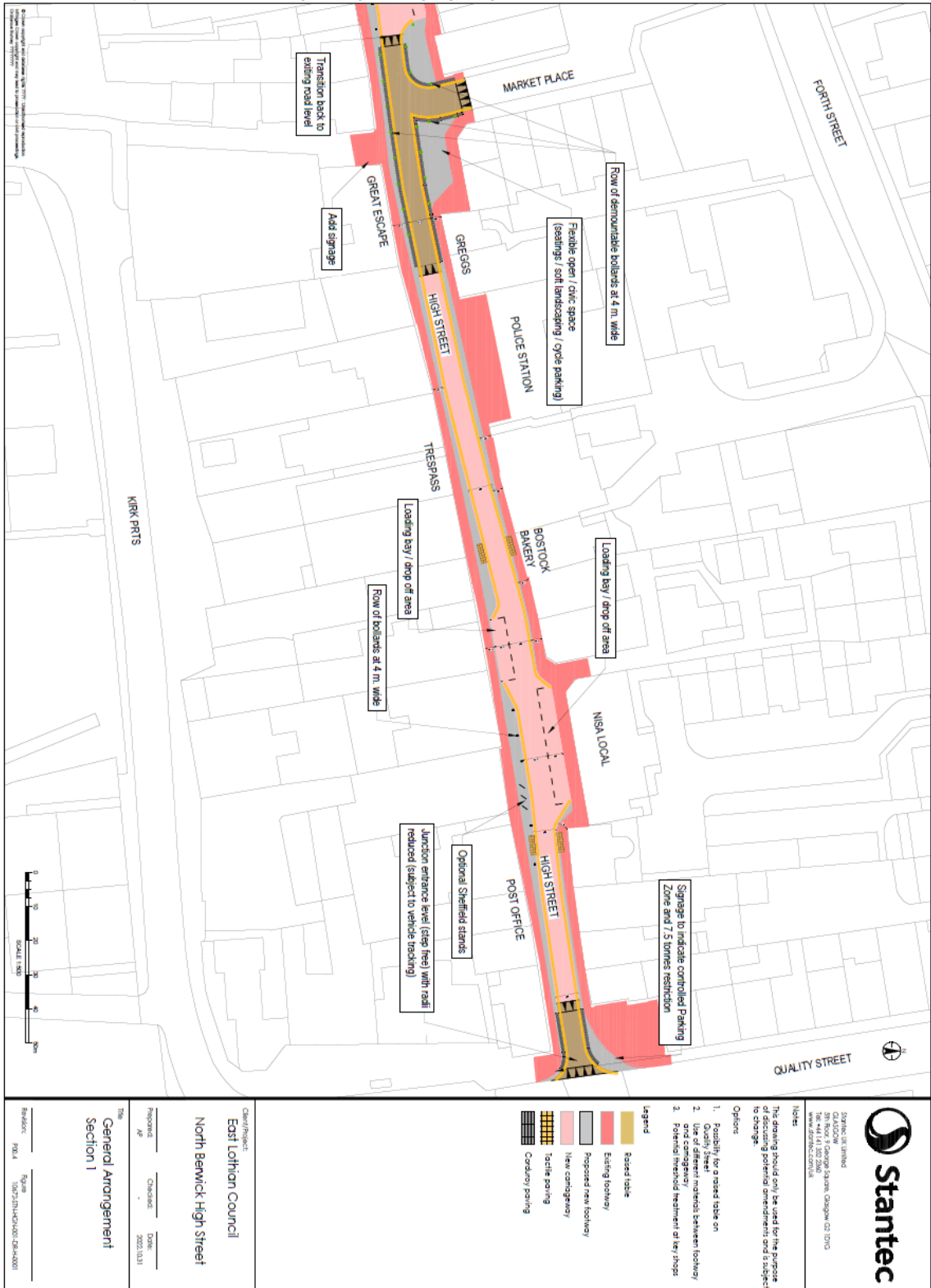
https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/17039/members_library_service

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Appendix A		
Prohibition of parking		
1	High Street, North Berwick	Prohibition of parking from junction with Quality Street to junction with Market Place

Appendix B

Layout of preferred option



Appendix C

Infracworks visualisations of preferred option

