

Report to	Lead Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment
Date	25 January 2010
Report By	Director of Transport and Environment
Title of Report	New Road, Uckfield – Proposal to close New Road to vehicular traffic
Purpose of Report	To expand on the report presented to the Lead Member in November 2009 regarding the proposed closure of New Road, Uckfield to through traffic.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to authorise:

- (1) the progression of the scheme through detailed design stage; and**
 - (2) the publication of the statutory notices for the proposed Traffic Regulation Order.**
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1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 The implementation of the proposal will be funded entirely by the developer, Linden Homes, who are required by planning condition to undertake a scheme to limit traffic using New Road, as part of their planning consent for 240 dwellings at Cysleys Farm, Eastbourne Road, Uckfield.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 At his meeting on 16 November 2009, the Lead Member deferred making a decision on this issue. A copy of the report is attached at Appendix A and contains the background to this matter and the reasons for recommending the closure. It should be referred to in conjunction with this report. The Lead Member requested that a site visit be arranged to enable him to familiarise himself with the current situation and proposed alterations to New Road. The Lead Member also called for traffic data to be collected that will detail the number of vehicles currently using New Road.

2.2 The site visit took place on 11 December 2009 and was attended by Councillor Lock, the Lead Member, Councillor Dowling, District Councillor Sweetland, Mr Jon Gothard (petitioner), Mr Michael McLoughlin (resident), Mr Peter Selby (resident), and officers. The purpose of the site visit was to allow the Lead Member the opportunity to view the site first hand and gain further insight into the differing opinions regarding the proposals.

2.3 Traffic monitoring was undertaken by East Sussex County Council Transport Monitoring over a 12 hour period on Thursday 26 November 2009. This involved manual counting of vehicles entering and exiting New Road at both the Lewes Road and Eastbourne Road junctions. Manual counts were favoured over automated counts as registration plates could be recorded by enumerators and later cross checked against the time they have spent in New Road to establish if the vehicle movement was a 'rat run'.

3. Comments/Appraisal

3.1 The traffic survey data has indicated that New Road is highly trafficked, considering it's characteristics as a narrow residential road. By way of registration plate recording it was possible to accurately count how many vehicles were in fact using New Road as a rat run over the 12 hour survey period.

3.2 After interrogating the information, the following results have been concluded:

Of the 383 vehicles exiting New Road into Lewes Road, 10% (37 vehicles) were identified as 'rat runners' (westbound movement).

Of the 595 vehicles exiting New Road into Eastbourne Road, 11% (64 vehicles) were identified as 'rat runners' (eastbound movement).

Of the 429 vehicles entering New Road from Lewes Road, 15% (64 vehicles) were identified as 'rat runners' (eastbound movement).

Of the 448 vehicles entering New Road from Eastbourne Road, 8% (37 vehicles) were identified as 'rat runners' (westbound movement).

3.3 Whilst actual numbers do not at first glance indicate a problem in terms of vehicles rat running down New Road, a number of additional considerations should be taken into account.

- Once fully occupied, the 240 dwelling development of North of Eastbourne Road is likely to generate substantial additional vehicle movements a day. A number of these movements will be drivers wishing to use New Road as a short cut to access the A22 resulting in an increase in traffic.
- The nature of New Road as a narrow residential street does not lend itself well to its use as a safe short cut to the A22. On-street parking takes place restricting the width of the road, and the nearby allotments, community hall, and playing fields increase the chance of conflict between vulnerable road users who access these areas and motor vehicles. However, it is highly likely that future residents of the development will perceive this route as a convenient short cut.
- The junction of New Road and Lewes Road is of a substandard nature. When attempting to exit New Road onto Lewes Road driver visibility is restricted by the alignment of the road and parked cars. This junction does not meet current standards. Any additional traffic using this junction will increase the likelihood of vehicular conflict at this location.

3.4 In respect of the first point above, the increased use of New Road has been identified through the planning process and was addressed in the Transport Assessment that accompanied the original planning application to Wealden District Council. This issue, along with the substandard nature of the Lewes Road/New Road junction resulted in the County Council as Highway Authority, voicing concerns that they would not wish to see an increase in vehicular traffic using New Road.

4. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

4.1 It is therefore recommended that the closure of New Road, Uckfield to through traffic be taken forward through the detailed design stage, and that notices of the proposed TRO's be published. Following publication of the notices any representations will be considered by the Planning Committee and a decision will then be made by the Director of Transport and Environment as to whether the Order, and in what form, should be made.

4.2 The closure will improve road safety for residents and users of New Road, and in particular pedestrian and cyclists, whilst also removing the likely increased usage of 'rat running' vehicles.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Transport and Environment

7 December 2009

LMTE: Proposed Method of Traffic Limitation along New Road, Uckfield

Contact Officer: Nathan Hancock

Tel. No. 01273 482252

Local Member: Councillor Dowling

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Letters received from New Road residents that are concerned with the petition

Report to	Lead Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment
Date	17 December 2009
Report By	Director of Transport and Environment
Title of Report	New Road, Uckfield – Proposal to close New Road to vehicular traffic
Purpose of Report	To: (i) advise the Lead Cabinet Member of the requirement for developer funded measures to close New Road, Uckfield to vehicular traffic at its junction with Lewes Road; (ii) recommend progression of the scheme through detailed design and construction; and (iii) consider a petition opposing the proposed closure.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1. Approve the proposal for the closure of New Road at its junction with Lewes Road, subject to resolving any issues raised by the emergency services; and**
 - 2. Advise the petitioners that, at present, their concerns regarding the potential closure of the post office are not supported by evidence that the post office will suffer a reduction in usage.**
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1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 The closure of New Road to vehicular through traffic would be funded by Linden Homes, the developer of the site known as "Land to the North of Eastbourne Road, Uckfield.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 New Road is predominantly a residential road linking Eastbourne Road with Lewes Road at the southern end of Uckfield. It is sometimes used as a 'short cut' for traffic travelling between these two roads.

2.2 Planning permission was granted by Wealden District Council (WDC) on 23 January 2009 for 240 dwellings at Cysleys Farm, Eastbourne Road, Uckfield, subject to a Section 106 Agreement. A copy of the Planning Decision Notice and Approved Layout Plan are attached at Appendix 2.

2.3 Through the planning process, East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Officers raised concerns to WDC that they would not wish to see a significant rise in traffic movements along New Road, due to the substandard visibility at the junction of New Road and Lewes Road, the narrow nature of New Road itself, and the possibility that residents of the new development would use New Road as a 'rat run'/the most direct route to the A26/A22. WDC accepted this position and the planning permission requires that a traffic management scheme for New Road be implemented by the time the 52nd dwelling of the new development is occupied. .

2.4 At the County Council meeting on 13 October 2009, Councillor Dowling presented a petition to the Chairman requesting that consideration be given to reversing the decision that New Road be closed to through traffic because the residents feel it will result in the eventual closure of Ridgewood Post Office and stores. A copy of the petition is available in the Members' Room. Standing Orders provide that where the Chairman considers it appropriate, petitions are considered by the relevant Committee or Lead Member and that a spokesperson for the petitioners is invited to address the Committee. The Chairman has referred this petition to the Lead Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment.

3. Comments/Appraisal

3.1 Linden Homes undertook a public consultation exercise in February 2009, with the initial design involving a partial closure, which was originally set out as a preference in the Section 106 Agreement attached to their planning permission. After residents voiced their concerns over the design, a further consultation was arranged for July 2009 attended by ESCC and WDC officers. The issues raised are covered at Appendix 1.

3.2 Prior to the consultation a localised letter drop was undertaken to advise residents. This covered approximately 400 dwellings and included all residents living in the Lewes Road/ Eastbourne Road/New Road triangle. The local Postmaster requested an additional 100 letters to be placed in his store in Lewes Road. Residents were able to make comments on a response form that could be completed on the day of the consultation or taken away and returned within 4 weeks.

3.3 As the views of those residents most affected by the closure are a major consideration, the opinions of New Road residents have been given priority. Although the option of a full closure was not supported by a 100% of New Road residents, it was supported by a substantial majority (70%) of those

who completed response forms at the public consultation in July 2009, of which 62% reside in New Road. A copy of the report is attached as Appendix 3.

3.4 Although a large number of residents were given the opportunity to express their views, only 83 responses were received. The petition expresses concern at the results of the consultation exercise held in July 2009, due to the low number of respondents, but all residents did have an opportunity to comment.

3.5 The covering letter of the petition suggests that the closure of New Road to through traffic will lead to the closure of the Post Office. If New Road were to be closed at its junction with Lewes Road, the Post Office will still be an attractive draw for passing trade, albeit some existing users may need to take an alternate route.

3.6 At a meeting with the organiser of the petition, held on 20 October 2009, it was claimed that a loss in trade would result from existing customers no longer being able to travel to the Post Office along New Road. The Post Office would still be accessible by motorised traffic via Lewes Road, which has a wide carriageway and is capable of accommodating high volumes of traffic. This is in direct comparison to New Road, which is a narrow residential street that is effectively an informal one-way street due to the presence of on street parking. Existing pedestrian and cycle access to the Post Office remains.

3.7 The feasibility of introducing traffic calming features in New Road (as suggested by the petition) was raised at the consultation meeting held in February 2009. This was not favoured by residents of New Road, principally due to the loss of on street parking that would result from traffic calming measures being implemented.

3.8 Should a full closure go forward as the preferred option, it will be necessary to implement a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). This will involve further consultation with Statutory Consultees as well as the general public. Should objections be received and unable to be overcome a final decision on any closure will be determined by the Planning Committee.

3.9 I have considered the duty under s122 (Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984) to secure the expeditious convenient and safe movement of traffic so far as is practicable having regard to the matters set out in s122(2). Whilst the proposed closure will impact on access to premises along New Road, by making some residents take a longer route to and from their residence, I consider that reasonable access to premises is maintained. It is recognised that to a degree it does cause an inconvenience. However I do not consider this to be unreasonable, and any inconvenience is outweighed by the benefits to highway safety that will be achieved through the closure. Having regard to the objectives of the scheme I consider these measures proposed to be appropriate and proportionate. I do not consider that the other factors set out in s122(2) to be effected in this case.

4. Community Safety Issues

4.1 Any increase of traffic along New Road or at the substandard junction of New Road and Lewes Road resulting from the development on Eastbourne Road, has the potential to impact adversely on community safety in the area. New Road has a Village Hall, allotments, playing fields, a playground, and Public House. Additional vehicular movements along New Road will increase the potential for conflict between motorised traffic and pedestrians crossing the road to access these facilities.

5. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

5.1 There is no evidence to suggest that the closure of New Road to motorised vehicles will have a detrimental effect on the patronage of the Post Office located in Lewes Road. It is felt that traffic calming measures alone would not halt a rise in traffic using New Road or the Lewes Road junction.

5.2 It is therefore recommended that having regard to the likelihood of danger and harm caused by the increase in traffic and, subject to resolving any issues raised by the emergency services, to inform the developer that the proposed scheme to close New Road at its junction with Lewes Road to traffic in both directions should be taken forward to detailed design stage.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Transport and Environment

Contact Officer: Nathan Hancock Tel. No. 01273 482252
Local Member: Councillor Dowling

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Letters received from New Road residents that are concerned with the petition, the Petition

ISSUES RAISED AS PART OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION EXERCISE

Issue 1:

Closure should be part way along New Road.

Comment:

This issue was raised a number of times during the consultation. A proposal such as this would effectively create two cul-de-sacs in New Road. In such instances it is a requirement to provide turning heads at the end of the cul-de-sacs to allow vehicles to turn around in a safe manner. Given the limit of adopted highway in this area this suggestion is not viable as any turning heads would require the purchase of third party land to construct on. This would also not address the existing safety problem at the junction of Lewes Road/New Road.

Issue 2:

Construct a roundabout at the junction of Eastbourne Road and the by-pass (A22)

Comment:

The creation of another roundabout to the south-east of the Little Horsted roundabout would not guarantee it's usage by residents of the new development. Anyone wishing to travel to locations north of Lewes would still likely use the Little Horsted roundabout. This would ensure New Road remained an appealing short cut to the A22.

Issue 3:

A traffic survey of the increased traffic should take place now and post-occupation of the residential development.

Comment:

The residential development is being constructed in phases, resulting in a staggered occupation, which means any increase in traffic along New Road is likely to be a slow increase. A substantial increase in traffic may therefore not be immediately obvious through traffic surveys, and by this time pressure would already have been compounded on the substandard Lewes Road/New Road junction. Given the conditions set out in the Planning Conditions it is requirement for a scheme to be in place by the 52nd occupation of the new development.

Issue 4:

A 20mph speed limit should be enforced on New Road

Comment:

This would also be unlikely to reduce the amount of vehicles travelling down New Road as no preventative measures would be attached. Given the narrow nature of the carriageway and the large amount of on street parking that takes place it is unlikely that speeds are much higher than 20mph at present.

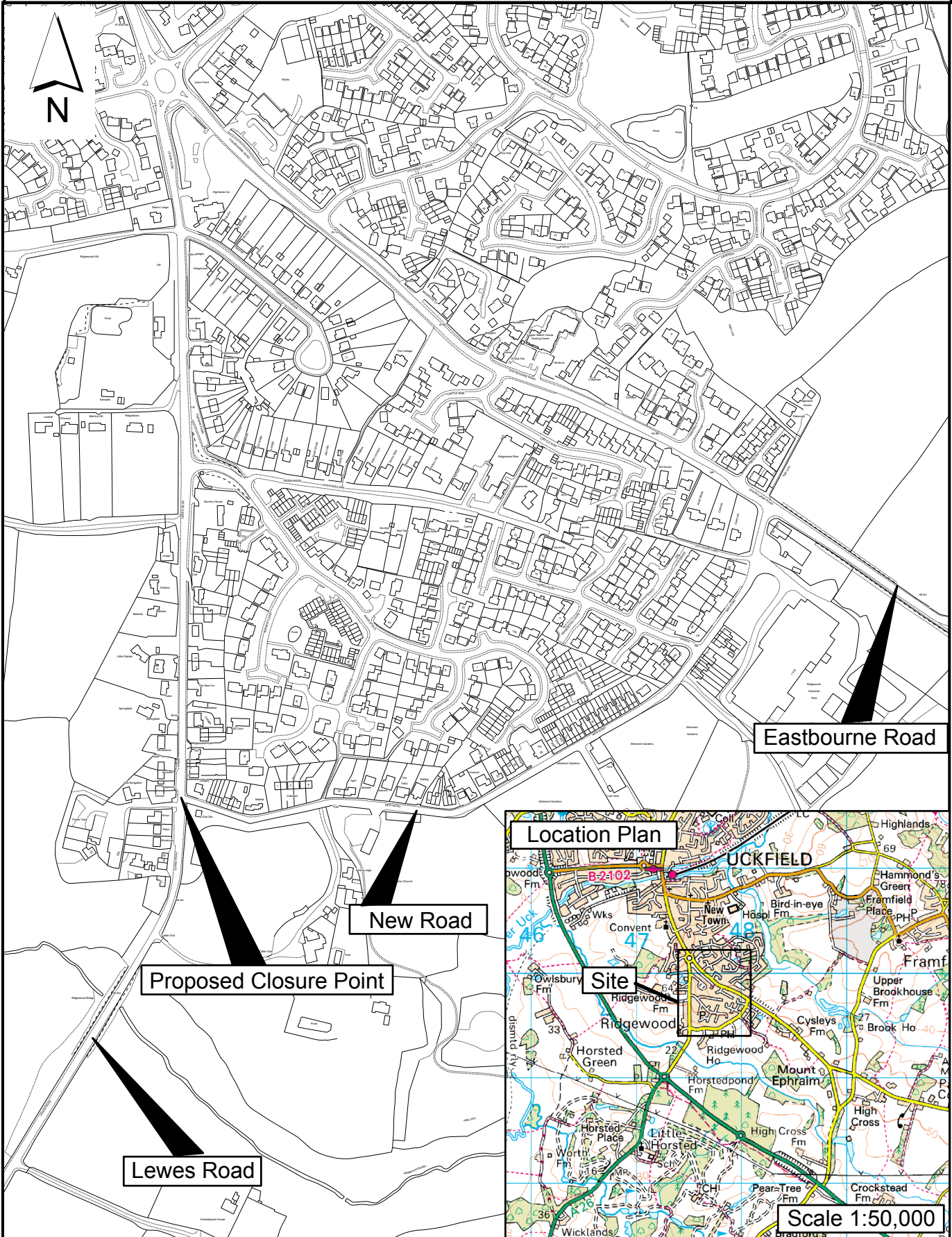
Issue 5:

Only traffic calming is required on New Road, no further measures

Comment:

This would not be an adequate way of limiting traffic. Although potentially deterring some vehicles it is likely that there would still be a material increase in traffic passing along New Road. This increased use would exacerbate existing concerns at the substandard Lewes Road/New Road junction and also a safety concern to non-motorised users.

New Road, Uckfield - Proposal to close New Road to vehicular traffic



Scale 1:5000

Rupert Clubb
BEng (Hons) CEng MICE
Director, Transport and Environment
East Sussex County Council

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