

The Maldon Society

Planned Temporary Pedestrianisation of the High Street.

Introduction

The Maldon Society Committee (who mostly live near and all of whom regularly use the High Street) considered these proposals on 21st October. The points below were drafted by the member with long standing family ownership of premises on the High Street, and fully endorsed by the Committee as a whole.

- It is recognised that pedestrianisation would allow more room for pedestrians and space for extra external seating, but this is heavily outweighed by the disadvantages identified below. The reduction in pollution could be partly addressed by other means, and would not compensate for the loss of the market town's 'bustle'. In fact by making traffic make longer journeys it is possible the proposal adds to the overall carbon footprint.
- Unfortunately Maldon's unique topography and riverside position make it unsuited to closure that might otherwise work for other flatter, inland towns. Even where this has been attempted recently however, it is noted that decisions have been reversed as in practice town business has been killed off.
- The amount of footfall is currently heavily influenced by the small amount of car parking available relative to the number of businesses. Pedestrianisation would represent unwarranted significant overkill as the number of pedestrians even at busy times is not overwhelming the pavements greatly. It is still possible to avoid close contact with others so the improvement in space would not be justified.
- It is not clear from the consultation how long a period is proposed, but even a short period could have dramatic consequences.

Specific comments are as follows.

Permitted Vehicles

- The barricades outside Old Police Station and on Fullbridge will restrict traffic to “buses, taxis & permit holders AB”. Will they be manned?
- Who will have permits? There are an estimated 160 residences within the restricted area. Will each one require a permit? Are they allowed visitors? How do the visitors get permits? There are a few businesses with parking for their customers, for example: The Smoke House in Cromwell Lane, The Limes Guest House, TDR Computers, Beardall Restorations, Co-op Funeral Directors and the Town Council Offices. The worshippers to United Reform Church and the church hall; will they require permits?
- The barricade outside Wetherspoons says “buses only”, so presumably any residents or delivery vehicles have to approach from West Square, as it is also “buses only” outside the Town Hall.
- There is a “buses only” sign at the top of Market Hill, so a delivery driver with goods for the High Street *and* Market Hill will have to drive all the way round the bypass from one drop-off to the next?
- The sign on Fullbridge says “buses, taxis & permit holders AB”, yet the sign outside the Town Hall says “buses only”. Why are taxis not permitted through into the High Street?

Problems on Adjoining Roads

- The only route to the Butt Lane car park is along Wantz Road. The road is already congested and will become more so. The paths are narrow with no provision for social distancing. An accident waiting to happen.

- The only route to exit Butt Lane car park is along Mill Road. Another narrow road that cannot take the increased traffic. Social distancing is already a problem as the pavement is too narrow. Pedestrians walk in the road to avoid one another into the path of speeding cars. Buses driving towards the High Street mount the pavement near the end of Wantz Chase to avoid waiting cars. The motorists will then have a choice between Park Drive (a speedway) or the other half of Mill Road that can only accommodate one line of traffic due to parked cars.
- The only route to the boatyards in Downs Road and North Street will also be along Wantz Road. A boat on a trailer in Wantz Road will be a nightmare.
- The bus “gate” by the entrance to the Prom will become another bottleneck for buses.
- Gate Street will have increased traffic due to the closure of Silver Street next to All Saints’ Church. Another road unsuitable for increased traffic.
- The closure of Silver Street will be a problem for the parents of children at Maldon Court School. They will have to turn round and go back along Gate Street.

Pedestrians

- Where are the crossing points? Both pelican crossings are out of use. Where is there a safe crossing place for the elderly, blind, partially sighted, and children? The High Street should not become a “shared” space and a free-for-all with pedestrians risking their lives. Bus drivers, taxi drivers and delivery vehicles will be dreading a pedestrian just walking out in front of them. In January the National Federation of the Blind UK (NFBUK) submitted a petition to 10 Downing Street calling on Boris Johnson to take action against local authorities who are in ‘complete denial of the severity of the problems created by shared space’.
- No thought has been given to bus passengers waiting in the rain as the bus stops have been moved away from the shelters.
- No thought has been given to visitors unable to find the taxi rank hidden behind the shops in White Horse Lane.

Congestion in the High Street

- No thought has been given to delivery vehicles, large or small, stopping in the narrow road, blocking buses from either direction.
- No thought has been given to Blue Badge holders wanting to visit the bank, for example. Yet another holdup.
- No thought has been given to ambulances attending to patients taken poorly in the shops. Yet another holdup.

Other problems

- Along what route will the traffic be directed to the car parks? As Wantz Road is the only way to get to Butt Lane car park, how will the traffic be directed to Wantz Road? Warwick Drive, Queen Street and Cross Road cannot cope with more traffic. Assuming regulars to the town will arrive via Spital Road, when they find White Horse Lane car park full, they will drive down Fambridge Road, along Warwick Drive through to Wantz Road. The roads cannot cope with this extra traffic.
- Visitors to an area invariably like to drive through a town to see if it’s worth parking and enjoying the shops. With the High Street closed they will bypass the town completely. They may stop at the out-of-town retail park but not tempted to walk up the hill if they cannot drive up. Thus, far from helping the High Street, the diversion will hinder the recovery.
- Then what happens when the bypass is closed due to an accident or diesel spillage? Where does all the traffic go? An estimated 11 mile diversion around Ulting is the

shortest route through narrow country roads. Local traffic will know the route causing chaos in the villages.

- In the evenings the High Street could become a magnet for youngsters causing mayhem and anti social behaviour. The area then becomes a very *unwelcome* area for other pedestrians with little chance of flagging down a vehicle to assist.

This is what should really happen!

- Stop lorries using Market Hill. There is a weight limit of 7.5 ton lorries; that limit should be reduced and the restriction should be enforced. There are many lorries using Market Hill as the shortest route and should not be in the High Street either.
- The 20 mph should be permanently applied and painted on the roads. Many drivers are concentrating on the way ahead, thus the temporary signs are missed. The 20 mph should be extended to Victoria Road, Wantz Road, Mill Road, London Road and Highlands Drive.
- Install a pelican crossing at the top of Market Hill. The trickle of pedestrians over the zebra crossing causes much of the congestion on the hill.
- The Maldon District Council is still refusing to open their offices due to “working from home”; when will the Council allow the public to park in the deserted compound?

Ms L Wright

On behalf of The Maldon Society