

Baldock Town Centre Enhancement : Issues for Review – Working Document March 2010

Item Ref:	Item for Review	Public Request	NHDC Officer, HCC and Police Comments	Recommended Actions
A:	DESIGN ISSUES:			
A1.	Church Street – Loading Bay	<p>There is a general view that the loading bay on the western side outside the George & Dragon should be relocated further north, to allow for this area to be used for other activities as suggested in the overall design. It is advised that vans tend to park in this space all the time and spoils the ambiance.</p>	<p>This loading bay serves the local businesses within the Sun Street area and is well used. There is an existing TRO restriction for this bay of: “No Waiting at any time Except for Loading Only for a period not exceeding 20 minutes”.</p> <p>This option could be considered as part of the town-wide parking review which will include giving consideration to parking restrictions along Church Street (See Item Ref B4 below).</p> <p>It is the HCC view that this location was chosen to assist the butcher and other local shops to receive their deliveries and they should be consulted before it is relocated.</p> <p>This location was also selected for the hearse for any funeral arrangements. It is also the view of HCC that as there are existing parking issues along Church Street, and they believe relocating this loading bay would compound the problem.</p> <p>The Police are not aware of any issues that affect the operational efficiency of the current loading bay. It is their view that if the bay is relocated on the west side in Church Street, it should be within the southern portion of the parking area so that larger vehicles could drive straight into it.</p> <p>Before a decision is made to move the loading bay, the Police suggest a “tracking check” be done to ensure vehicles entering Church Street can still negotiate the bend whilst a large vehicle is parked within a loading bay. It may be necessary to further restrict parking on the east side of the road to accommodate turning movements of larger vehicles.</p>	<p>That officers investigate the options for relocating the loading bay and commission a vehicle tracking exercise to be undertaken to ensure that large vehicles can negotiate the junction as well as undertake initial consultation with the local businesses and residents in the immediate area. This investigation to be included as part of the town-wide review.</p>
A2.	High Street – Taxi	The taxis and	The signs are positioned in accordance with the required specification	That officers arrange for the

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	parking bays.	other vehicles keep bumping their bumpers against the parking sign posts which are considered to be too close to the kerb.	of 500mm back from the kerb line. Given that the signs in use and road markings are in accordance with the regulations, it is suggested that three signs are excessive and consideration is given to the possible removal of two of the posts leaving the sign on the lamp column in the middle. This will accord with DfT Traffic Signs Regulation and General Directions 2002.	two posts on either side of the lamp column to be removed.
A3.	Whitehorse Street – Request for bench on southern side and to relocate the bench from outside Zeus Hotel in High Street.	Request for a bench rather than a leaning post on the south side of Whitehorse Street. Suggestion is for a bench in the vicinity of the entrance to the United Reform Church.	It is both the view of the designer for the scheme, BDP, and the officers that there is insufficient space on the footway on the southern side of Whitehorse Street to install a bench. As suggested, there appears to be space at the entrance to the United Reform Church. This appears to be private property as opposed to Highway and would need to be clarified. It is suggested that the bench outside Zeus Hotel be relocated to this possible location. However this will have to be undertaken outside the defects period for the contract to ensure there are no conflicts with the contract area. A quote will need to be sought for this work as well as permission form the respective landowner.	That officers investigate the cost for relocating the bench from outside Zeus Hotel in the High Street to the entrance outside the United Reform Church in Whitehorse Street and seek approval from the respective land owner. Once the investigation is completed and providing the relocation can be undertaken, it is suggested that a request for funding by the Baldock Area & District Committee is made through the Community Development Officers report in the future.
A4.	Mansfield Road and High Street Junction	Concern about visibility turning out of Mansfield Road into High Street. Police have	This was listed in the Stage 3 safety Audit and the following was suggested by HCC: “that an additional motorcycle parking bay be created to achieve a 50m visibility splay which will accord with the desirable minimum sight distance.”	That Officers approach the designers of the Scheme, BDP, to consider the various options, seek HCC and Police approval and provide a cost estimate on the

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		<p>received repeated complaints concerning the apparent lack of visibility for vehicles leaving Mansfield Road of northbound traffic on High Street & vice versa. Near misses are a common complaint.</p>	<p>It is the police view that the removal of all car parking within the bay between the south side of Mansfield Road and the vehicle access at the south end of the lay-by would resolve the visibility issue.</p>	<p>agreed solution. Available funding would then need to be sought. Members will be informed about the outcomes and possible funding arrangements through an updated report in the Summer.</p>
A5.	<p>Hitchin Street Pedestrian Crossing outside Town Hall</p>	<p>Concerns about traffic not stopping in time at the Pedestrian crossing outside the Town Hall opposite Church Street.</p>	<p>The location or design of this crossing was not raised in the Stage 3 Safety Audit Report although brought to the attention of the Chief Safety Auditor, who considered the issue and used the pedestrian crossing a number of times before reaching the conclusion the layout was acceptable.</p> <p>It has been positioned in this location to reduce the speed of traffic and to provide a more direct pedestrian link between the High Street and Church Street thereby improving and strengthening the links between the open spaces at High Street, Church Street and Whitehorse Street. The existing crossing is now provided at the point where pedestrians have historically crossed the road.</p> <p>While the police are not entirely satisfied that the pedestrian crossing is as effective as intended and vulnerable road users are the most likely to be involved in an incident due to difficulties in reacting quickly to avoid a collision. The Police are not aware of any road traffic collisions having occurred at this location since the crossing was opened. They have received a number of complaints via vehicle drivers and</p>	<p>That the crossing continues to be monitored by the police and HCC and that the designers, BDP, be asked to give consideration to what if any measures could improve the operational efficiency of this crossing point.</p>

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			<p>pedestrians, both complaining they have had “near misses” involving emergency braking or emergency jumping to avoid contact between pedestrians and a vehicle.</p> <p>A check of the Police system shows one reported “near miss” of the 6th June 2009. This was soon after the Scheme was implemented. Drivers have now got used to the crossing and this is not unique as similar layouts occur in other towns.</p>	
A6.	High Street - Request for additional pedestrian crossing	Request for additional crossing point near library. This is the direct route used by most school children from Pepper Alley	<p>The Police have viewed the site and suggest the pedestrian desire line is from a point in line with Pepper Alley on the west side of the road to an opposite point on the east side of the road, south of the junction with Simpson Drive. This is approximately 50 metres north of a pedestrian crossing immediately north of the junction with Mansfield Road.</p> <p>Pedestrians are currently using this location to cross the road. Visibility of pedestrians from approaching vehicles is partially obscured at times by parked vehicles that occupy the various parking bays that line the edge of carriageway.</p> <p>A crossing point further north closer to the junction with Simpson Drive as suggested is not practical as it would conflict with the bus stops and the turning movement of vehicles accessing Simpson Drive, it would also mean the loss of approximately 16 car parking spaces.</p>	That no action is taken as it is felt that the road was narrowed to allow the speed of traffic to drive slowly and to have an appreciation of expected pedestrian movement.
A7.	Hitchin Street Lighting Levels	Lighting levels along Hitchin Street are poor – concern about security. No street lights along southern section.	<p>This issue was raised in the Stage 3 safety Audit as not being acceptable for a busy urban ‘A’ road.</p> <p>The police have also expressed concern about the low level of illumination along this section of road.</p> <p>It was agreed at the time of design implementation with HCC street lighting department to accept lower lighting levels along this street by</p>	That HCC Street Lighting Department be requested to investigate the possibility of increasing the illumination within Hitchin Street and inform the Baldock Members accordingly.

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			<p>reusing the majority of existing positions and adding a minimum number of new fittings which would require listed building consent. The achieved lighting levels in Hitchin Street is an average of 7 lux, 0.15 uniformity.</p> <p>HCC have advised that as previously discussed during the scheme implementation there is no funding available to upgrade this lighting. The location, i.e. Hitchin Street in Baldock will now be included on the county wide overall list of locations for upgrading and will be judged within the following categories as outlined below, and will be selected and funding becomes available. Schemes are selected for delivery on an annual basis.</p> <p>Categories for Selection</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="757 699 1675 1102"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="757 699 967 778">Availability/ accessibility</th> <th data-bbox="967 699 1189 778">Safety</th> <th data-bbox="1189 699 1435 778">Environment</th> <th data-bbox="1435 699 1675 778">Condition</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="757 778 967 1102"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Busiest Roads • Busiest footways/ priority footways • Cycleways • Route to/ from public transport </td> <td data-bbox="967 778 1189 1102"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road safety record • Crime/ disorder problems • Vulnerable Users • CCTV coverage </td> <td data-bbox="1189 778 1435 1102"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy consumption • Light pollution • Regeneration benefits </td> <td data-bbox="1435 778 1675 1102"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighting levels • Structural Condition • Maintenance problems </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Availability/ accessibility	Safety	Environment	Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Busiest Roads • Busiest footways/ priority footways • Cycleways • Route to/ from public transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road safety record • Crime/ disorder problems • Vulnerable Users • CCTV coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy consumption • Light pollution • Regeneration benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighting levels • Structural Condition • Maintenance problems 	
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A8.	Hanging baskets on some lighting lanterns	Request for hanging baskets on some street lights as there used to be.	<p>Allowance was not made in the overall Project budget for hanging baskets as these were considered to detract from the overall design of the scheme – which is simplistic and rustic. Additional trees, new open grassed areas with swathes of spring bulbs have been introduced into the scheme plus landscaping of the memorial garden, which all help to soften the scheme.</p> <p>The lamp posts have been designed to take the weight of hanging baskets. In order for permission to be granted from HCC, confirmation</p>	It is recommended that this item is not pursued given the cost and associate on-going maintenance , plus the officer view that hanging baskets will detract from the scheme.								

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			<p>will need to be given which will be reliant on the proposed weight and size of the baskets.</p> <p>There will be costs associated with requiring specialist brackets to be fitted to the lamp columns, plus alternative funding arrangements would need to be investigated as the Council no longer has a budget for hanging baskets. This was put up as a saving 3 years ago across the District.</p> <p>Funds would have be sought through Sponsorship or by the Area Committee or through the Baldock Town Partnership.</p>	
A9.	Trees	There are a number of trees that appear to be dead and need to be replaced.	These will be replaced as part of the defects period and will be checked by Landscape contractors in the spring. Any trees will be replaced in the autumn.	Officers to ensure that the dead trees are replaced as part of the defects period under the contract with Skanska.
A10.	Whitehorse Street – Request for Finger Post sign	Request for fingerpost sign to Methodist Church.	There is a concern about setting a precedent in the town centre as this could result in unnecessary street clutter. It is the officer view that the Methodist Church can be seen from the street and it is suggested that the church investigate putting a sign on their boundary wall.	That no action be taken for reasons provided under the comments column.
A11.	High Street Power Bollards	Concern about when these will be ready for use.	The correct power voltage levels have now been installed as per the design specification. NHDC are now progressing the necessary paperwork with EDF to activate the meters so that the pillars can be used.	That Officers inform the Members, the Town Centre Manager and the Market Operators when the power bollards are ready for use.
A12.	Design of disabled parking bays in Whitehorse Street and outside Cost-cutters in the High Street	People have reported difficulty in accessing and using these bays.	NHDC to seek comments from the Designers, and the Police regarding the design layout to ensure that they accord with highway safety requirements and the Traffic Act.	Officers to investigate the design layout of these bays and to report back to Members on their findings in due course.

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B	PARKING ISSUES			
B1.	Parking for businesses in town centre	Question as to where NHDC expect businesses to park if imposing more restrictions in residential streets	Officers have observed that the unrestricted bays provided at the southern end of the High Street are not fully utilised. As part of the Planning Conditions for the recent Tesco Store development some 30 business parking bays have been secured to be proved at an agreed location on the Tesco site prior to works commencing on site. It is the officer view that there is sufficient parking provision for businesses in the town centre albeit not immediately outside business premises.	That no further amendments are made to the current TROs within the High Street, Whitehorse Street and Hitchin Street in terms of increasing the amount of unrestricted parking bays, given that they are not fully utilised at present, and additional provision has been secured within the Tesco's parking area.
B2.	Resident Permit Car Parking	Given the limited number of permits issued since the start of the scheme, request to extend the resident permit parking across the other restricted bays in High Street and Whitehorse Street. There is not always available spaces within designated	To date some 29 permits have been issued. Officers are of the view that there is sufficient amount of space for resident permit holders throughout the scheme, albeit not within their desired bay. Any increase in the number of resident permit parking bays will result in amending the existing TRO and will incur additional costs.	That the existing TRO should remain unaltered.

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		areas.		
B3.	Extending time restricted Bays outside the Post Office in Whitehorse Street	Request to extend the time restrictions in the parking bays outside the post –office on Saturdays and into the early evening on week days as these bays are being occupied by residents.	When considering the parking restrictions for the town centre a balance had to be struck between the users of the town centre, namely the businesses, the visitors and the local residents. To implement a new restriction would result in amending the existing TRO which will incur costs and could also lead to confusion amongst parkers along Whitehorse Street with different time restrictions. The council has not received any other comments regarding the timings of the parking restrictions in the town centre.	That the existing TRO should remain unaltered.
B4.	Thurnall Close, The Twitchell Non-resident parking.	Numerous letters have been received from Residents regarding non residential parking issues in Simpson Drive, Thurnall Close and The Twitchell. There is a request for a resident permit parking scheme in this area.	<p>These streets along with the other residential streets surrounding the town centre will be included as part of the town-wide parking review as agreed in the Parking Strategy Action Plan, for which a growth budget of £65K for 2010/2011 has been agreed.</p> <p>Investigatory work will commence in April and a list of roads for inclusion and suggested restrictions will be presented to Members for their consideration and prioritisation which will be subject to available funding.</p>	That officers commence with the town-wide parking review and include the Thurnall Close, Twitchell and Simpson Drive area in the review. Once the initial investigation work is complete officers will report to Members in the Summer outlining their recommendations for schemes to be implemented in accordance with budget constraints.
B5.	Church Street – Non –Resident	Numerous letters have	Officer comment is as per Item Ref B3 above. It is also to be noted that the police and HCC support the NHDC parking Strategy in adopting an	That officers commence with the town-wide parking

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	<p>Parking issues</p>	<p>been received from residents regarding the difficulty of parking in Church Street near their homes due to all day commuter or town worker parking. There is a request for residents permit parking scheme in this area.</p> <p>Also an issue regarding access for emergency vehicles along residential streets in this area due to parked cars, particularly close to junctions.</p>	<p>area wide approach in trying to address parking issues within the town.</p> <p>With regard to access for emergency vehicles concerning Church Street and its junction with Orchard Road, the police suggest that the introduction of waiting restrictions in the vicinity of this junction should consider incorporating a gateway type feature possibly including extension of the existing kerb build out on one or both sides of the road together with road markings to highlight and inform road users of the restriction at this location. Such build-outs will need to accommodate both emergency and larger vehicles.</p>	<p>review and include the Church Street and the suggested junction improvement with Orchard Road in the review.</p> <p>Once the initial investigation work is complete, officers will report to Members in the Summer outlining their Recommendations for schemes to be implemented in accordance with budget constraints.</p> <p>Included in this investigation will be the possible relocation of the loading bay northwards as outlined in item Ref A1 above.</p>
B6.	<p>High Street – Overnight Lorry Parking</p>	<p>Lorries parking in High Street overnight towards the southern end.</p>	<p>The following Restriction is assumed to exist: The Hertfordshire (Baldock Area Restriction) (Goods Vehicles in Excess of 5 tonnes Gross Weight) (Prohibition of Waiting) Order 1991, prohibits goods vehicles having a maximum weight exceeding 5 tonnes to wait during the hours of 8pm and 7am Monday to Friday or any time</p>	<p>That officers in consultation with the Police undertake the necessary site inspections to see if the signs are located in the correct locations in</p>

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		<p>Also enquiry regarding the possibility of introducing a weight restriction ban for vehicles below 5 tonnes.</p>	<p>on Saturday or Sunday on any road within the restricted area.</p> <p>Provided the terminal signs associated to the TRO are in place at the entry points to the restricted area, which includes the southern portion of the High Street then the restriction theoretically remains enforceable.</p> <p>Currently the minimum weight restriction that may be introduced is 5 tonnes. Any weight below this would require Secretary of State (SoS) approval. The likelihood of this being approved is minimal given that that this is a town centre location.</p> <p>However should members wish to pursue this option then it is suggested that this is included in the letter to the SoS requesting the no-left lorry ban into the A505 from Station Road (See Item Ref C7.)</p>	<p>accordance with the TRO restriction for goods vehicles in excess of 5 tonnes gross weight. Any missing signs are replaced. This can be funded through the Lines and Signs Maintenance budget allocated for 2010/2011.</p>
C	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ISSUES			
C1.	Cycling in Baldock	<p>Discussions about: Restoring two-way cycle access to Church St and Sun Street. Possible removal of North Road pinch point, Improve Cycling links between Clothall</p>	<p>Herts Highways are in consultation with the ctc, local police and NHDC in finding an appropriate solution.</p> <p>Unfortunately HCC are unable to afford the proposed scheme from Clothall Common to BTC. This scheme is now part of the countywide cycling ranking process and will be built when funding is secured.</p> <p>The issue regarding cyclists being exempt from turning right from Station road into Icknield Way is being addressed as part of the options being considered by HH for this junction following their analysis on the outcomes from the experimental order. (refer to Item Ref C4 below).</p>	<p>That HH report to Members on progress in relation to Item Ref C4.</p>

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		Common and Baldock Town Centre and the railway station. Cyclists exempt from all TROs, right turns etc...		
C2.	General concerns about traffic speeds through town centre.	Consider 20mph speed limit.	<p>Since completion of the scheme the Police have not received any complaints regarding traffic speed in the town and advise that any changes to existing or proposed speed restrictions must now comply to the various criteria and guidance contained within the Hertfordshire Speed Management Strategy that has been adopted county wide.</p> <p>The HCC Speed Management Strategy indicates that when reviewing the speed limit for a section of road, it would seem appropriate that speed limit reduction should only be considered where the 85th percentile speeds are less than the threshold at which enforcement would be required. For a 20 mile per hour zone - the maximum 85th percentile speed according to the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) is 24mph. The ACPO set guidelines for the threshold at which enforcement action should be taken.</p> <p>Following completion of the scheme, HCC carried out four surveys along the High Street in October 2009 for a one week period. The speed survey undertaken indicates that the minimum speeds within this area is 25.4mph and the maximum is 33.9mph. These are beyond the guidance levels set by ACPO. To enable this zone to be a 20mph then traffic calming features like road humps will have to be considered to reduce speeds .</p> <p>Based on the above, HCC have advised that they will not recommend this route be reduced to a 20mph zone for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the minimum speed is beyond the 24mph threshold, 	That Members note the comments made by HCC and the Police on this issue.

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • this route is a bus route and <p>this route is a diversionary route for any incidences on the Bypass , meaning that HCC would not want to implement any physical measures like road humps in this location.</p>	
C3.	Royston Road/Clothall Road – slip road at junction	Concern that cars wanting to turn left onto Clothall Road from the B656 are mounting pavement outside Magdalene Court to pass cars queuing on Royston Rd.	<p>It is the Police view that if the traffic signal heads on the spur road displayed a red signal at the same time as the signal heads for traffic travelling west on the B656 there may be less desire for vehicles to mount the footway and undertake stationary vehicles ahead of them.</p> <p>They are of the view that the introduction of bollards may also reduce the likelihood of footway over running.</p> <p>Hertfordshire Highways are aware of this issue and it is proposed to provide 2 to 3 timber bollards (which should be adequate to prevent vehicles from mounting the footpath) along the Royston Road footpath adjacent to Magdalene Court. In order to minimise the footpath restriction, the bollards should be erected approx 450mm back from the kerb face. Implementation will take place early in the next financial year. Their only reservation is that their early investigations have revealed a number of utility services in the footpath, which may cause difficulties.</p>	That Members agree with the implementation of bollards in this location and request that they are kept informed on progress.
C4.	North Road/Ickniel Way -No right turn.	No right turn into Ickniel Way not working. Cars are still turning right into Ickniel Way from Station Rd	<p>The Police have witnessed repeated offending at this location involving southeast bound vehicles turning right into Ickniel Way before & after the temporary traffic island and have submitted an objection to the experimental order.</p> <p>HCC have reviewed the scheme following the experimental order and note that there is a 50% reduction in non compliance. They are now investigating various options to further restrict the movement and to accommodate cyclists turning into Ickniel Way.</p> <p>HCC are in the process of consulting with the local police, emergency services and other statutory bodies on their various options before</p>	That HCC present their recommended option, following their consultation with statutory bodies, to Members for their consideration and agreement on the next stage in the process.

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			<p>presenting their recommended proposal to Members.</p> <p>This would then require formal consultation as part of the TRO process and JMP approval.</p>	
C5.	Station Road/A507 Junction – Traffic Light Design	Double traffic lights facing same way and first vehicle in queue cannot see the facing light as it is directly above the vehicle.	<p>HCC advise that the Traffic Advisory Leaflet 1/06 - Part 1 of 4 states the following in relation to secondary signal heads; <i>'In certain circumstances it may be undesirable, or impractical, to position the secondary signal beyond the junction. On these occasions the secondary may be on the entry side of the junction, beyond the stopline and primary positions and preferably on the offside. This is known as a closely associated secondary.'</i></p> <p>Following this guidance and for safety reasons, the far sided signal head is omitted, so that road users are observing opposing vehicles rather than totally relying on the instruction of the signal head. This is why a closely associated secondary signal head has been designed for on Royston Road only and not on Station Road or Clothall Road.</p> <p>Members may also recall that the closely associated signal head was not be positioned on the offside, following discussions with the residents of Raban Court.</p> <p>Traffic Signal Designers and Safety Auditors within Hertfordshire follow this guidance throughout the county and have applied this in other locations.</p> <p>It is the Police view that provided vehicles stop at or before the stop line the driver should be able to see the signal head in front of them.</p>	That Members note the comments from HCC and the Police on this issue.
C6.	Norton Road and Hitchin Street – queuing during peak traffic periods and Weston Way	Phasing of Weston Way lights causing queuing cars in Norton Road	<p>HCC advise that the traffic signals at Letchworth Road/Weston Way and Whitehorse Street /Clothall Road are both connected to the Hertfordshire UTC (Urban Traffic Control) System.</p> <p>Both sites will run SCOOT (Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Techniques)</p>	That Members note the HCC comments and request that they are advised when the SCOOT system comes into operation in March and at

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	and Whitehorse Street Junction Scooting System	and Hitchin Street.	<p>optimised timings based on local traffic conditions once validation of the inductive loops is complete (Programmed for March 2010). This system will adjust the timings at each set of signals depending on current traffic conditions. If congestion increases in the town centre then the signal timings will restrict traffic entering the town centre until such time the congestion levels return to acceptable levels.</p> <p>The signals are not directly linked to each other as the consistency of journey times can not be guaranteed due to uncontrolled crossing points and the roundabout at Whitehorse Street/High Street.</p> <p>The new signal controlled junction at Baldock Road/Jubilee Road Letchworth will also be connected to the SCOOT/UTC system to help gate traffic entering Baldock from Letchworth. This facility will only be available once the existing UTC system is upgraded which is programmed for late 2010.</p> <p>One of the intentions of the enhancement scheme was to reduce rat running, including along Norton Road. It is both the officers and the Police view is that If the signal phasing is adjusted to make it easier to exit Norton Road then the rat running issue is not being addressed.</p>	the end of 2010 with the completion of the Baldock Road/Jubilee Road junction works in Letchworth.
C7.	Introduce No left turn lorry ban from Station Road (A507) into Royston Road	Requested that an update be provided on this issue.	<p>Herts Highways are in the process of seeking an indication from the Secretary of State on what his view is likely to be if he were asked to consent to the introduction of a non standard proposal requiring his consent to proceed.</p> <p>The SoS's view for the introduction of a minimum weight restriction below 5 tonnes overnight in the town centre could also be sought at the same time. (See Item Ref B6 above)</p>	That Herts Highways be requested to proceed with the enquiry of the Secretary of State and advise Members accordingly.