



Low Traffic Lewes Project Progress February 2022



Background

1. In December 2020 Lewes Town Council agreed to support the Low Traffic Lewes Project led by Lewes Living Streets and Cycle Lewes. It also agreed a grant of £5,400 to fund two studies to support the project and particularly objectives 1 and 3 below:
 - A survey of visitors to Lewes High Street and shopping area (and a similar survey of businesses) and
 - A camera survey to ascertain the current volume of through-traffic on the High Street.
2. The Town Council also appointed Cllr Richard Waring to represent it on a group of interested traders, Chamber of Commerce and Transition Town Lewes who worked with Lewes Living Streets and Cycle Lewes and who reviewed the proposed visitor survey questions.

The Low Traffic Lewes Project Objectives

3. These were set out as:
 1. Quantify motor traffic in the High Street (Western Road to School Hill), and proportion of through-traffic, in order to...
 2. Set out and design options for reducing through motor traffic, whilst retaining motor traffic access for deliveries and on-street parking.
 3. Carry out a survey of shoppers and visitors accessing the High Street to establish modes of transport, how often they visit, how much do they spend, if by car where do they park, and whether they prefer to shop in the Precinct and Cliffe or School Hill/The High Street and why.
 4. Develop options and designs for slowing the traffic on the High Street to the speed limit 20mph or less, whilst creating more space on the High Street for people to enjoy it/socialise/encourage al fresco café-type culture as well as to shop
 5. Provide a scheme for a cycle route along the High Street/School Hill (as part of Cycle Route 90), including two way on School Hill, in order to bring cyclists into the High Street
 6. Provide a scheme for a pedestrian and cycle link between the Precinct and School Hill/High Street
 7. Identify possible rat running alternatives to the High Street, and set out how they might be made less attractive to motorists.
 8. Investigate a possible northern route for traffic to by-pass the High Street via two way Little East Street, West Street and Offham Road

Visitors and Business Survey

4. Because of Covid-19 the start of this survey was delayed until visitors had returned to the town. A face to face survey of visitors was commissioned from IBP Strategy and Research, who had carried out similar work elsewhere in the UK. They carried out their survey in August 2021 interviewing 310 people who were present in School Hill/High Street/Precinct/Cliffe High Street at this time. A similar version was delivered at the same time to 230 businesses of which 74 responded by post or by handing it back to the collector. The results are summarised in the linked document **Visitors, Businesses and on-line Residents Survey**. <https://www.cyclelewes.org.uk/low-traffic-lewes-project-survey-results-feb-2022/>
- 5.

On-line Residents Survey

6. A separate but similar **on-line survey targeted at residents** was also conducted early in 2021. This was publicised in Lewes News and to people on the Lewes Living Streets and Cycle Lewes mailing lists and promoted in the Precinct. This secured 304 responses. It showed a higher level of support for changes.

Results: Overwhelming support for more planting, seating, wider pavements and hop on/off bus

7. A range of possible changes to make the High Street more attractive were tested on participants. **The Visitors survey showed positive support for all these changes except the ban on through-traffic. Support for the changes was generally lower in the Businesses survey but higher in the on-line residents survey.**
8. The table below shows the level of support for changes across the three surveys. Note that 'Residents' is the on-line survey targeted at residents. The figures show the net support: those who were favourable minus those who were not.

Change proposed	Net support		
	Visitors	Residents	Businesses
1. More planting	+73%	+82%	+63%
2. Hop on hop off bus	+57%	+47%	+40%
3. More bench seating	+59%	+69%	+39%
4. Wider pavements in places	+51%	+76%	+9%
5. Reduced vehicle traffic	+43%	+77%	+12%
6. More cycle parking	+38%	+70%	+25%
7. More tables and chairs outside cafés	+41%	+64%	+38%

Note that the column "Residents" above refers to the on-line residents survey.

Change proposed	Net support		
	Visitors	Residents	Businesses
8. Slower traffic speeds	+35%	+78%	+45%
9. More pedestrian crossings	+31%	+61%	+15%
10. Taking out some on-street parking	+18%	+70%	-29%
11. Add cycle lane down School Hill	+3%	+56%	-42%
12. Measures to slow/reduce through traffic	+4%	+58%	-22%
13. A ban on through-traffic	-5%	+40%	-59%

Note that the column "Residents" above refers to the on-line residents survey.

Other Results: residents spend more

9. The results for the visitors survey also showed how they came to Lewes, how often they usually visited, what they came for, how much they spent, how many shops/premises they visited and more. It should be noted that whilst people living in Lewes spent less per visit they visited more often and so spent more overall. (See results in Appendix)

Camera Survey: 2,000 vehicles a day are through-traffic on the High Street

10. This survey was also delayed because of Covid-19 and because major road works at Earwig Corner up to the end of September 2021 meant that the motor traffic flows were likely to be unusual.
11. The survey of through-traffic on the High Street/School Hill was carried out by Intelligent Data Collection Services Ltd for a week from 16th November 2021. They used cameras on the High Street at the Westgate Road junction and on Phoenix Causeway bridge to read the registration plates of vehicles coming into and out of the High Street.
12. The numbers for the first day (Tuesday - 24 hours) were as follows with a similar pattern for the other days (although numbers were down slightly at the weekend):

Heading East

2,730 number plate records were captured heading in to the town centre at the High Street cordon (Westgate), of which the following went out of town over the Phoenix Causeway bridge a few minutes afterwards:

Number exiting	Within these minutes	% of total
1,322	5 mins	48.4%

1,423	10 mins	52.1%
1,460	15 mins	53.5%

Heading West

2,888 number plate records were captured heading out of the town centre at the High Street cordon (Westgate), of which the following had come in to town over the Phoenix Causeway bridge a few minutes beforehand:

Number exiting	Within these minutes	% of total
1,257	5 mins	43.5%
1,480	10 mins	51.2%
1,547	15 mins	53.6%

12. The results showed that around 50% of vehicles on the High Street were driving straight-through. This is more than 1,000 vehicles a day each way. On this basis, 2,000 vehicles a day could use the A27 and the Cuilfail tunnel but instead drive through the High Street and could be discouraged to from doing so to the benefit of the town. More detailed results are in the linked document **Lewes High Street Through-Traffic Survey** (<https://www.cyclelewes.org.uk/lewes-through-traffic-camera-survey-results-feb-2022/>)

Next Steps

13. Forming the working party into a project board involving High Street traders, Chamber of Commerce, Friends of Lewes, Transition Town Lewes, Lewes Access Group, a representative from the Town Council and others. This will review the results and consider options for progressing those changes which achieved a net positive score amongst visitors.
14. We will present the results of the two surveys to groups in Lewes including residents groups and the Chamber of Commerce (who have already requested a briefing).

Our work with Urban Movement to date

15. Throughout the project Urban Movement (transport planners, traffic engineers and urban designers) have provided advice. In particular they have:
- confirmed that it would be possible to accommodate all of the changes identified in the survey but advise that there is limited room for many of the improvements cited without removing some of the on-street parking spaces.
 - carried out a feasibility study with regard to providing a cycle lane down School Hill (contra-flow). They have indicated that this is possible but will require the removal of

some parking spaces and relocating a loading bay at the top of School Hill where the road narrows

- looked briefly at the possibility of a northern alternative to the High Street involving two way traffic on Little East Street, North Street and West Street and onto Mount Pleasant. But they think West Street is too narrow to allow vehicles to pass each other and that it is better to focus on discouraging through-traffic altogether.

Our Future Work with Urban Movement

16. We have asked Urban Movement to

- look at six areas where there are pedestrian flows across the High Street. These areas are at the School Hill/Eastgate Road junction; Albion Street junction; Market Street junction; Station Street/Fisher Street cross roads; in front of the Castle entrance/St Martins Lane junction; Westgate Street/Keere Street area
- to come up with designs for the above which provide all or some of those changes identified in the table above, apart from the last one (a ban on through traffic).

Hop on Hop Off Bus

17. A low fare “hop on, hop off” bus was one of the options tested and which secured overwhelming support. This could take people up the Hill to the County Hall car park which is available to the public at cheap rates on Saturday. Brighton and Hove Buses have indicated they would like to support this in principle.

Summary

18. The visitors, residents on-line and business survey showed support for changes to the High Street, although less support from businesses for proposals that would impact on on-street parking spaces. The camera survey showed that there is considerable scope for reducing through-traffic on the High Street by encouraging use of alternative routes around the town.

See also Visitors, Businesses and on-line Resident Survey <https://www.cyclelewes.org.uk/low-traffic-lewes-project-survey-results-feb-2022/> and Lewes High Street Through-Traffic Survey <https://www.cyclelewes.org.uk/lewes-through-traffic-camera-survey-results-feb-2022/>



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