



# WINCHELSEA TOWN PLAN

## **TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT CONSULTATION**

# **NON-SOLUTIONS**

# NON-SOLUTIONS TO TRAFFIC PROBLEMS

## Strategic non-solutions

### By-pass

The idea to build a by-pass around Winchelsea and Rye (and along the Brede Valley) has a very long history. It has never succeeded because of the opposition to the destruction of the Brede Valley and the lack of economic justification for a major East-West coastal highway. In the case of Winchelsea, the preferred by-pass route would have disfigured the historic landscape of the town by running a road around the northern and western sides.

The last by-pass proposal was rejected in 1995. The idea may resurface in the future but there is no sign of that at the moment, not least because of lack of funds. However, major road improvements in the East and the proposed Bexhill by-pass mean that the Guestling-Brenzett section of the A259(T) may come to be seen as a 'weak link' in the East-West route that needs tidying up.

## **A tunnel under Winchelsea**

This was proposed and given serious consideration at the public enquiry on the last proposal for a by-pass. The main objection was that it was very expensive (£25 million). Local objections focused on the need for three roundabouts and bright illumination at the mouths of the tunnel.

## **Detrunking the A259(T)**

This means that the A259(T) would become the plain old A259. The loss of trunk road status might dissuade some vehicles from trying to use the A259. However, it is unclear which East-West road would take the place of the A259(T). East Sussex County Council is opposed to detrunking as it would mean that they the cost of maintaining the A259 once again fell to them.

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## Solutions that will not be allowed

Some of the traffic calming measures that have been suggested for Winchelsea over the years are not practical. These include:

- **Speed humps** ('sleeping policemen') --- these require streetlights that shine down onto the road. Winchelsea's 'footlights' do not do this. Advance traffic signs would also be required, which would clutter the townscape. Such measures are therefore expensive.
- There was a proposal for (1) **right-turn only** at the junction of Monks Walk and the A259(T) at Sandrock Hill and (2) **left-turn only** at the junction of Strand Hill and the A259(T). The idea was to prevent through traffic using Winchelsea (eg vehicles from Rye could enter Winchelsea by Strand Hill but not exit by Sandrock Hill. The County Council will not support this proposal as they do not believe the turning restrictions could be enforced. In addition, it would require illuminated traffic signs, which would clutter the townscape and add to light pollution. There would also need to be no exits onto the A259 from Back Lane, Hiham Gardens, Mill Road and North Street, which would require more traffic signs and would be a nuisance to residents.

- **Priority at Strand Gate** to traffic coming up Strand Hill. It was hoped that this would cause sufficient delay to traffic going downhill to dissuade some rat-runners from cutting through Winchelsea. However, the fact that vehicles going downhill cannot easily see vehicles coming the other way is judged to make this restriction impractical (the mirror is regarded as providing inadequate visibility). There is also the risk that the restriction would encourage rat-runners going downhill to drive even faster down the High Street in an attempt to get to the Strand Gate before traffic appeared coming the other way.

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## Solutions that are not advisable

- We have been advised against one-way systems, chicanes and pinchpoints other than where there is a fairly constant two-way flow of traffic.

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## Solutions that create other problems

Other suggested traffic calming measures have unacceptable side effects. These include:

- **‘Junction tables’** at each of the four cross-roads on the C298. These are raised brick surfaces installed at cross-roads that are designed to slow traffic by acting as both road humps and as ‘psychological’ traffic calming measures which work by making drivers unsure of the road (they create the impression of a pedestrian precinct). However, junction tables need illuminated traffic signs and are consequently very expensive (between £40,000 and £100,000 each).
- **Narrowing Monks Walk.** This would require occasional passing spaces, which would in turn require traffic signs. The verges would also have to be protected from vehicles not willing to wait in the passing spaces.

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## Funding obstacles

Money for traffic management on non-trunk roads such as the C298 through Winchelsea --- which is the responsibility of the County Council ---- comes from two sources: central government via the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and from East Sussex County Council's budget.

LTP funds are available only for traffic calming measures that will help meet the government's road casualty reduction targets. Of the 74 schemes proposed by the County, LTP funding is enough for only 2-3 a year.

The County Council's highways budget has been cut every year for several years. This reflects the fact that general funding from central government has failed to keep pace with demands on the County's budget (next year, East Sussex will get the lowest increase in central government funding in the country). The County Council has responded by focusing on its statutory duties. Unfortunately, traffic management is not a statutory duty. Next year, the cuts proposed in the highways budget range are likely to be at least 25% and could be as much as 90%. There is therefore little money for traffic management from this source.

In the Eastern highways district of East Sussex (within which Winchelsea falls), about 50 sites have been identified for traffic management schemes to be funded by the County Council. However, there is only enough money to do 3-6 a year.

To even get onto the County list, a location has to meet a stringent set of criteria (number of crashes and casualties, proximity of schools and hospitals, and traffic flow). The LTP list is even more stringent. Winchelsea comes nowhere near meeting these criteria: we have not had enough crashes to qualify. We need at least four crashes over a three-year period at each individual site where we want traffic management measures.