

Army and Navy Sustainable Transport Package - Van Diemans resident meetings

Virtual meetings were held between the Army and Navy Sustainable Transport Package project team and residents at lunchtime on Wednesday 26 January 2022 and during the evening of Monday 31 January 2022.

The meetings were organised to update residents on a proposed revised layout for Van Diemans Road and potential Lady Lane junction options following feedback received during the public consultation last summer and an on-site meeting with residents in September 2021. The following questions/comments were raised during the meetings.

Van Diemans Road proposals –

Q: Would the existing parking bays in Van Diemans Road be retained and be the same size in the proposed new Van Diemans Road layout?

A: Yes, the permit parking bays would be retained and would be the same size but would be slightly realigned.

Q: Would the parking laybys on Van Diemans Road remain as permit parking?

A: Yes. There are no plans to change the current permit parking arrangements as part of the project, nor is it within the project team's remit to do so.

Q: Are there any plans to reduce the speed limit on Van Diemans Road as part of the proposals?

A: The traffic modelling we have done assumes the current 40mph speed limit is retained and a change in the speed limit is not something we have considered at this stage but will be looked at as part of the next phase of our work. Essex County Council is also reviewing the status and speeds of traffic on roads across Essex as part of a wider review and we will raise the matter with that team as well.

Q: Why are you reallocating road space from car drivers to cyclists?

A: The junction itself and Van Diemans Road can be improved for motorised vehicles while also providing much better facilities for walking and cycling so it is not a case of one or the other. We want people to have the option to drive if they want or need to, but also want to encourage people to walk or cycle if they can do because of the health benefits and to reduce the number of vehicles on the road network with more sustainable journeys being made.

Improvements to the Army and Navy junction would improve peak period car journey times, on average, by about 50%. The amount of traffic on Van Diemans currently is not that high but it queues because vehicles cannot get out onto the roundabout. The hamburger roundabout option would benefit Van Diemans Road because the road through the centre of the roundabout between Essex Yeomanry Way and Parkway would take traffic away from the roundabout itself, making it easier for vehicles to join the roundabout from Van Diemans Road and therefore improving the flow of traffic out of Van Diemans Road and improving journey times. Two lanes northbound on Van Diemans Road does not provide a significant change in journey times in comparison to one lane, it just queues the traffic in two lanes. The most important thing for improving journey times is to enable traffic out onto the junction, which the hamburger roundabout option would do.

Q: Why is the two-way cycleway now proposed on the western side of Van Diemens Road rather than the eastern side?

A: The option we consulted on had a two-way cycleway on the eastern side of Van Diemens Road but the feeling from residents during the site visit was that we should keep cyclists on the western side, where the cycleway is currently signed. Having a cycle route on the eastern side is still an option and so has not been ruled out at this stage.

Q: Can anything be done to stop cyclists riding on the eastern side of Van Diemens Road?

A: The issue currently is that the look and feel is very similar on both sides so people do use the eastern side when cycling to and from certain locations. The proposed new segregated cycling facilities would make the western side look very different and hopefully people would therefore cross and cycle on that side. The proposed removal of the subway would also reduce the likelihood of people wanting to travel on the eastern side. We will also consider what else can be done to dissuade cyclists from using that side.

Q: Would the signal-controlled crossing on Van Diemens Road near the Army and Navy junction be safer? It is often blocked by vehicles so you cannot cross.

A: Unfortunately, blocking of the crossing is down to poor driver behaviour. The crossing width would be wider because it would also be for cyclists so it should be even clearer to drivers that they needed to keep the space clear. The distance to cross for pedestrians and cyclists would also be shorter because Van Diemens Road would only be one lane in each direction. The proposed changes are likely to have a neutral impact in terms of safety.

Q: Has consideration been given to the safety and visibility of the crossing on Van Diemens Road near the Army and Navy junction?

A: Part of the reason the crossing was originally proposed to be moved closer to the junction was to improve visibility, however, it has been moved back to its original position in the latest designs because of concerns about access to one of the properties. Signalling the Army and Navy junction should significantly change the look and feel of the junction, allowing greater control of traffic and slowing drivers down. Road safety is at the front of our minds and we are working closely with the road safety team to make sure the junction is as safe as possible.

Q: Would the green space on the western side of Van Diemens Road, south of the Lady Lane junction, be lost under the current proposals?

A: Under the current proposals, the strip of grass between the road and the footway on the western side of Van Diemens to the south of the junction with Lady Lane would be lost, along with some of the grass between the existing footway and residential property boundaries.

Lady Lane junction options –

Q: Concerns were expressed about the restriction of traffic movements to/from Van Diemens Lane/Moulsham Chase required for the potential signalised Lady Lane junction options and the impacts this would have on residents.

A: Although this is not a formal consultation, the purpose of the virtual meetings and sharing this information is to present the options that have been identified following the previous discussions with residents of Van Diemans Road and to get feedback on them. No decisions have been made and comments will be considered in identifying a preferred option for Lady Lane. The give way option would not restrict movements.

Q: A resident suggested she would favour closing off Moulsham Chase because of concerns about speeds and the road 'being used as a racetrack'.

A: It is hoped the reduction in journey times on Van Diemans Road because of the improvements at the Army and Navy junction would reduce the likelihood of people using Moulsham Chase to get ahead of the queue on Van Diemans Road.

Q: Would traffic from Van Diemans Lane be able to turn right into Van Diemans Road with the give way option?

A: Yes

Q: Could you turn right from Moulsham Chase into Van Diemans Road with the give way option?

A: Yes

Q: Has consideration been given to the impact of the Lady Lane options on residents?

A: Yes, that is the reason residents are being engaged via the meetings and the sharing of this information. Unfortunately, there is always a balance with schemes in terms of the benefits and impacts. The give way option for Lady Lane is fairly similar to the current arrangement and could be scaled back further but some changes are needed to accommodate the revised layout of Van Diemans Road. We are looking at improvements to Lady Lane, as requested during the site visit.

Q: Would the Lady Lane junction options increase traffic using Moulsham Chase?

A: The only option that might increase traffic in Moulsham Chase would be the signalised right turn out only option.

Q: Are the project team using Moulsham Chase as another way around the Army and Navy junction?

A: No

Q: Could a yellow box be included on Van Diemans Road at the Lady Lane/Moulsham Chase junctions to stop cars from blocking the junction and preventing vehicles exiting on to Van Diemans Road?

A: A yellow box could only be placed at a signalised junction. Keep clear markings would have to be used instead for a give way junction.

Q: A concern was raised about the potential loss or reduction in size of an area of green space on the corner of Moulsham Chase to accommodate possible pedestrian improvements associated with the potential Lady Lane junction layout options.

A: The current options would all have an impact on the green space, but to differing extents. Additional space is required to ensure the new junction meets current design standards, notably in terms of the turning radii we are required to provide.

Q: What are the likely timescales for the scheme and would the Lady Lane improvements be completed at the same time as the Army and Navy junction works?

A: If the land required for the Army and Navy scheme does not have to be acquired via Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) then the current programme suggests a spring 2025 start date at the Army and Navy junction. The project team are currently looking at phasing and how to best keep traffic moving during construction, but it is envisaged that the work on Van Diemens Road would be complete by the time the work at the Army and Navy Junction is finished.

Q: Could improvements to the Lady Lane junction be delayed to see what the impacts of the other measures at the Army and Navy junction are first?

A: The Army and Navy Sustainable Transport Package is an opportunity to bid for funding for the Lady Lane improvements and such opportunities might not be available in the future. The give way option for Lady Lane is fairly similar to the current arrangement and could be reduced back further but some changes are needed to accommodate the revised layout of Van Diemens Road.