

## Member Site Visit Meeting

4 December 2019 10am

**Traffic Regulation Committee members (including substitute members) attendance:**

<b>Councillors:</b>			
<b>Rob Bird</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Shaun Parsons</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>John Cordwell</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Alan Preest</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Kevin Cromwell</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Rachel Smith</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Iain Dobie</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Brian Tipper</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Terry Hale</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Will Windsor Clive</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Stephen Hirst</b>	<b>P</b>		

**P= Present A=Apologies**

(Cllr Kevin Cromwell completed a site visit on 9 December 2019.)

### **Officers in attendance:**

Philip Williams, Lead Commissioner: Community Infrastructure; Fraser Reid, Project Manager; Alexis Newport, Parking Manager; Richard Cornwell, TRO Engineer; Hannah Bassett-Louis, Lawyer; Andrea Clarke, Senior Democratic Services Adviser; Joanne Bolton, Democratic Services Adviser; Jeremy Williamson (Cheltenham Borough Council) – Cheltenham Development Task Force.

### **Site Visit regarding:**

Various Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders - Cheltenham Transport Plan Phase 4.

Weather conditions: Sunny, dry and cold.

### **Royal Well Road**

Philip Williams (PW) gave a brief overview and history of the scheme. The original phase 4 scheme, which became effective on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2018, received approximately 770 comments during consultation. The amended, current, scheme became effective on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2019. The amended scheme has resulted in more 'escape routes' for motorists to avoid the bus gate which is enforced via Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR). The amended scheme also took into account the comments submitted by local businesses and a number of appropriately located loading bays have been added throughout the extent of the scheme. Royal Well Road has been clearly marked with directional signage and advanced warning signage, directing

motorists away from Boots corner on Clarence Street. The result of this is that this street is much quieter and the number of infringements has dramatically fallen.

### **Promenade**

PW explained that due to the fact that the phase 4 scheme is an experiment, some of the infrastructure in the area has been installed on a temporary basis, so as not to pre-determine the outcome of the consultation or spend large amounts of money on something that may need to be taken out, i.e. the cycle racks. The TRO committee could see the additional loading bays in the area.

Cllr Tipper: Where are the park and ride bus stops?

PW: There is one on the Promenade and the D bus service that includes the Hatherley area and the train station stops in Pittville Street. These were pointed out to Cllr Tipper during the site visit.

### **Clarence Street**

PW explained the 'escape routes' for motorists include Post Office Lane. He also explained that the bus service times had become more reliable as a result of the scheme, they are currently the most reliable bus services in the South West and passenger numbers have increased by approximately 6000 per week.

Cllr Tipper: What are the cameras for?

Fraser Reid (FR) explained that the cameras are used to enforce the bus gate. If a vehicle that is not exempt from the restriction and travels through the bus gate then they will be sent a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) through the post. The bus gate signage was pointed out.

FR explained that due to the scheme being experimental, the scheme does not show on sat navs at present, but will do if the scheme is made permanent. FR explained that it is currently on Google if someone uses their phone for directions.

Cllr Parsons asked about the direction signing at the bus gate. Fraser Reid confirmed that the signing in Clarence Parade directs vehicles to the left away from the bus gate, and the signing in Clarence Street directs vehicles to the right, away from the bus gate.

Cllr Tipper: How long has this bus gate been in place?

FR explained that the phase 4 restrictions had been in since June 2018 and that the amendments became live in June 2019. It was also noted that there was a 'period of grace' when the scheme was first implemented when warning letters were issued.

Cllr Tipper asked how many PCNs had been issued for the bus gate and FR stated that this information is included in the TRO Committee report.

PW and Alexis Newport (AN) explained the reason for the bus gate relocation, the reasons included that motorists who had joined the one way system on Pittville Street were 'trapped' into going through the bus gate.

Hannah Bassett- Louis (HBL) explained to members that improvements in air quality were difficult to evidence as the experiment has only been live for 18 months. The longer a scheme is in place the better evidence we can collect to establish the impact on air quality.

### **Boots Corner**

It was observed and stated by PW that it has become easier for people to cross the road and the roads are quieter from traffic. Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) has implemented public realm improvements, such as benches. The scheme has not altered parking provision as before the scheme there were no permitted parking bays in the immediate area of Boots corner. More blue badge parking provision has been added in Winchcombe Street as part of the amendment, this was based on feedback received from the original phase 4 scheme.

Jeremy Williamson (Jem) attended the site visit from CBC and responded to queries regarding the local economy and vibrancy. He noted the 'two bookends' on the High Street at the Brewery Quarter and John Lewis & partners store and the flow of pedestrians between them.

Cllr Smith asked if the vehicles going through the bus gate were the same vehicles. AN explained that this information was not to hand but this would be looked into. AN suggested that the motorists who have received bus lane PCNs probably follow the same pattern as those that receive parking tickets, i.e. most people who do not comply are a one off but then you get a small percentage of people who are persistent offenders that don't care about the financial hit of a PCN.

PW explained that Marks and Spencer have a loading area around the back of the store, off Albion Street, which includes a collection area for bulky items. The Marks and Spencer customers picking up less bulky items can utilise nearby loading bays or off street car parks, which are a short walk from Pittville Street. Due to the Prohibition of Driving (POD), loading can only take place within the POD between 6pm and 10am. People's patterns have had to change to accommodate this. It was stated that CBC have been continually monitoring cycle and walking patterns and these are contained in the CBC cabinet report that was considered on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

It was recognised that the Pittville Street taxi rank used to be empty as the taxi drivers would not get a lot of trade from that rank so other motorists would park there

incorrectly and receive PCNs. Since phase 4 the taxi rank has been utilised a lot more. Today it was observed that the taxi rank in Pittville Street was full of taxis.

Cllr Preest commented that he had attended the original site visit in 2015 and that the traffic congestion and flow was much better today than it was back then.

Cllr Hale asked what the percentage of objections versus support was for the scheme. Richard Cornwell (RC) explained that it is difficult to distinguish this percentage split as comments received either object to or support certain elements of the scheme or the scheme in its entirety plus some comments are requesting for certain changes to be made. RC stated that in the first round of consultation for phase four approximately 770 comments were received and following the amendments to the scheme less than 200 comments had been received.

Cllr Preest asked if there was a 20mph speed limit in place. AN confirmed that the speed limit was 30mph. Cllr Preest stated that he observed a taxi driving through Boots corner very quickly.

### **St Georges Street**

This street is the nearest alternative route through the town to avoid Boots Corner on the western side of town and therefore this street has become popular and has consequently seen some degree of increased traffic flow and congestion. The large traffic growth on this street is the highest in the area, seeing an increase of approximately 25% - 30%, with an additional 600 vehicles each 24 hour period travelling through. FR stated these statistics. Work has been done to reconfigure traffic signals around the town centre to make routes more useable. PW stated that 7:45am – 8:30am is the peak traffic flow time of the day. The lack of yellow box junction on St Margaret's Way ring road at its junction with St Georges Street does not alleviate the traffic. PW recognised that St Georges Street and the ring road experienced congestion both before and during the Phase 4 trial. Cllr Dobie asked whether this congestion could be rectified at the same time as phase 4, PW stated that whether the phase 4 scheme becomes permanent or not, this area will need improvements, it wasn't part of this scheme due to the changes required costing substantial amounts and would not fall under revenue budgets but will require capital funding. PW also recognised that nationally local authorities needed to allocate more budget to traffic signals work as technology is moving fast in this area of highway infrastructure. PW noted that £1m funding has been allocated to deal with this sequence of traffic lights (and also some in Gloucester) in the 2020 budget.

Cllr Smith asked whether motorists in this area are local and where they are going to. PW suggested that they were travelling through to access Evesham Road and Pittville. PW stated that 70% of the traffic was local in this area.

Cllr Smith asked if Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) and CBC can expect a further modal shift. PW stated that following benchmark exercises with other

authorities there is a potential for GCC to improve upon this. It was stated that buses have been and should be given priority to guarantee a good public service.

Jem stated that in the last 10 years there has been a decrease by 30% of young people passing their driving test. This suggested that young people have already made the shift. Jem also stated that the Cheltenham Transport Plan (CTP) had not had a detrimental effect on local economy; this is evidenced by the level of investment in the town, such as John Lewis and The Brewery, and the ongoing appetite for investment, pointing out the refurbishment of the Quadrangle and 111-117 High Street on a speculative basis, plus the refurbishment of the Barclays and Lloyds bank buildings opposite John Lewis & partners.

### **Rodney Road**

PW stated that earlier phases of CTP were proposed and implemented to improve access to Regent Arcade Car Park, this was deemed successful but resulted in an increase in traffic utilising the route between Rodney Road, High Street and Winchcombe Street. It was recognised that this was not an ideal route for vehicles as the pedestrian footfall rate is very high in this area of the High Street. It was recognised that these vehicles may be using this route to access the new John Lewis car park. PW noted that he planned some traffic calming in the very near future.

### **Winchcombe Street**

PW stated that there are proposals for minor improvement works at the junction of Rodney Road and High Street to improve safety.

Cllr Smith asked if this area of the High Street (outside Next) gets congested. FR stated that traffic monitoring data for this area is included in the TRO Committee report.

The additional blue badge bay provision was pointed out in Winchcombe Street.

### **St Luke's**

The route comprised of a drive through and around the St Luke's area. There were no issues observed.

PW stated that College Road had seen an 8% increase on traffic and that the national increase in traffic was expected to be 5%. Therefore, the 8% increase is less of an impact than was expected. PW stated that earlier phases of CTP received a number of comments from St Luke's residents raising their concerns regarding the impact, but phase 4 has received less than a handful of comments from St Luke's residents.

## **Royal Well Road**

Cllr Hirst asked whether footfall in the town had been affected by the phase 4 changes. Jem responded by stating that The Promenade used to over-perform in terms of retail lease values but recently performance had decreased specifically on The Promenade, with the High Street re-establishing its position. This was due to the town centre losing national chains in common with all town centres. However, the town has now struck a positive balance between retail, food and beverage and office space, which has bought jobs to the town, e.g. 30,000ft of office space in the Brewery Quarter. It was recognised that footfall had declined nationally but overall Cheltenham had maintained a steady rate of footfall. He also noted that Cheltenham also retained other well-performing retail areas including Bath Road, the Suffolk's and Montpellier which had many more independent traders.

Site visit ended at 11:30 am.

## **Site Visit - Cllr Kevin Cromwell – Monday 9 December 2019**

**Present: Cllr Kevin Cromwell  
Fraser Reid, Project Manager**

Cllr Kevin Cromwell was not able to attend the site visit held on Wednesday 4 December 2019. In order to ensure that all members had had the opportunity to visit the key locations, a site visit for Cllr Cromwell was arranged to take place on Monday 9 December 2019. The site visit for Cllr Kevin Cromwell followed the same format and route as the site visit which took place on Wednesday 4 December 2019.

During the site visit Cllr Cromwell asked how much had Cheltenham General Hospital grown since 2015. He also questioned whether any of the traffic growth seen on College Road could be as a consequence of this. Fraser Reid (FR), Project Manager, responded that he did not have the information available to hand, but it could be looked into.

Cllr Cromwell questioned whether the St. George's Street/ St. Margret's Road junction was working better with the northern arm closed. He also questioned what would happen when the Aldi store opened. FR responded that further adjustments to the timings of the junction would need to be considered.

*(Post meeting note: The answers to the questions raised by Cllr Cromwell at the site visit will be covered at the Traffic Regulation Committee 16 December 2019.)*



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