

TRAFFIC REGULATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Traffic Regulation Committee held on Monday 16 December 2019 at the St Paul's Church, St Paul's Road, Cheltenham, GL50 4EZ

PRESENT MEMBERSHIP:

Cllr Robert Bird	Cllr Alan Preest (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Dr John Cordwell	Cllr Rachel Smith
Cllr Kevin Cromwell	Cllr Brian Tipper
Cllr Iain Dobie	Cllr Will Windsor-Clive (Chair)
Cllr Stephen Hirst	

Officers:
Gloucestershire
County Council

Philip Williams, Lead Commissioner Community Infrastructure
Hannah Bassett – Louis, Lawyer
Fraser Reid, Project Manager
Joanne Bolton, Democratic Services Adviser

Officers:
Cheltenham
Borough Council

Jeremy Williamson, Managing Director Cheltenham Development
Task Force
Gareth Jones, Senior Environmental Health Officer

Cheltenham
Borough Council

Cllr Steve Jordan, Leader of Cheltenham Borough Council

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Cllr Will Windsor Clive having been proposed and seconded, and there being no other nominations, the Committee

Resolved

That Cllr Will Windsor Clive be elected Chair for the remainder of the 2019/20 civic year.

2. ELECTION OF THE VICE-CHAIR

Cllr Alan Preest having been proposed and seconded, and there being no other nominations, the Committee

Resolved

That Cllr Alan Preest be elected Vice-Chair for the remainder of the 2019/20 civic year.

3. MINUTES

Resolved

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

That the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 3 December 2018 be approved and signed as a correct record.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

5. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

Twenty-seven questions had been received. A copy of the questions and answers was circulated and is attached to the signed copy of the minutes.

Question 1: Cllr Klara Sudbury asked for clarification on why county councillors who had highways responsibility were not allocated a speaking slot, particularly as she had requested to speak as one of the county councillors with Boots Corner in their division.

Joanne Bolton, Democratic Services Adviser, explained that all individuals who had registered to speak had been allocated a slot in the public speaking block on the agenda (with the exception of Cheltenham Borough councillors who had been allocated a separate earlier block on the agenda so that they could also attend the Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) full Council meeting taking place later the same day).

Question 2 - Cllr Klara Sudbury referred to paragraph 8.3 of the report and commented that county councillors were mentioned in regard to statutory consultees and stakeholders who were consulted. She added at 9.1 that it stated that 'No formal responses were received from any other statutory consultees/Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) standard Consultees'. Cllr Sudbury asked that as her response to the amended Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs) had been received did this mean the meeting papers were incorrect or were county councillors not statutory consultees.

In response, Hannah Bassett-Louis, GCC Lawyer, confirmed that from a legal perspective, county councillors were not defined as statutory consultees.

Question 3 – Cllr Klara Sudbury asked if the relevant legislation for ETROs specified that when an experimental TRO scheme was amended, the consultation for it did not just need to happen for an additional six months, but that it needed to be a new consultation with previous formal representations not taken into consideration when the entire scheme was decided.

In response, the Lawyer explained that that all individuals who had made formal representations on the original Cheltenham Transport Plan (CTP) Phase 4 ETROs, were informed of the amendments which were being made to the scheme. Following implementation of the amended ETROs, a further statutory 6 month formal consultation period was then undertaken.

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Question 7 - Cllr Klara Sudbury commented that the response to her question about the amount of money left for mitigation measures, did not make reference to how the pot of mitigation money agreed by GCC and CBC would be spent, or how much was left. Cllr Sudbury asked whether the pot of money still existed.

In response, the Lead Commissioner Community and Infrastructure, Gloucestershire County Council, explained that any surplus would be committed to improving cycling measures. The scheme was still live at present so the outturn financial position was not yet known.

Question 9 - Cllr Klara Sudbury asked why the redacted responses to both the ETROs and amended ETROs were not published with the rest of the meeting papers.

The Lead Commissioner explained that redacting the personal information from all formal representations received, involved a considerable amount of work which was not completed before the date of the publication of the meeting documentation. The formal representations made in regards to both the original ERTOS and the amended TROs, with personal data redacted, had now been published on the website with the meeting documentation.

Question 10 – Cllr Klara Sudbury clarified that her question related to how an individual’s formal representations on the ETROs would be used, not how their personal details would be used.

The Lead Commissioner explained that information on how the formal representations would be used was outlined on the webpage for submitting formal representations. There was a clear distinction between how a redacted formal representation and a representation containing full information would be treated.

All of the un-redacted formal representations had been made available to the Traffic Regulation Committee to view, ahead of the meeting. He reiterated that the redaction of personal data from the formal representations, in order for them to be published on the website, was a substantial piece of work to complete.

Question 14 - Cllr Klara Sudbury thanked officers for responding to a question she had raised in November 2018, on the subject of people being able to submit comments without ticking either the formal, or general comment box, and how those comments would have been recorded by the portal. She questioned whether this issue had been fully dealt with at that time, or had it also been a problem during 2019.

The Lead Commissioner confirmed that this issue had been dealt with at the time (the webpage was amended so that it is not possible to press the final submit button without selecting a category).

Question 16 – Cllr Klara Sudbury commented that there was a significant campaign led by St Luke’s and College Road residents in response to the Boots Corner plans. Cllr Sudbury questioned why there was no traffic monitoring done in St Luke’s Road

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prior to the trial beginning to provide background data and to provide valid evidence of how the trial had affected the area.

In response, the Lead Commissioner accepted that on reflection, it would have been prudent to have undertaken traffic monitoring on those routes, prior to the commencement of the trial, in order for comparisons to be drawn. However, the traffic counters put in place in St Luke's Road and St Luke's Place in November 2018 and September 2019, showed that traffic levels on those routes were low.

Question 17 – Cllr Klara Sudbury asked what observations had been done during peak hours in St Luke's Place to understand the road issues created by the increased traffic using this route.

In response, officers indicated that that they were not aware of any traffic observations undertaken on that route.

Question 19 – Cllr Klara Sudbury asked how officers were able to say that the traffic levels in St Luke's had not changed significantly when no baseline data was recorded in 2015, in either St Luke's Road, or St Luke's Place.

The Lead Commissioner clarified that the results of the traffic data collected on surrounding roads had led to this conclusion.

Question 20 – Cllr Klara Sudbury made reference to a meeting she had had with a senior officer regarding proposals for changes to Rodney Road, where it was suggested to her that the proposed zebra crossing was no longer being progressed and that the current thinking was more along the lines of restricting traffic. She added that another suggestion was that the road could be closed off and vehicles would have to turn around. Cllr Sudbury asked for confirmation on whether those suggestions had since been shelved.

The Lead Commissioner explained that those suggestions had not been discussed with the Cabinet Member, so had no formal status. They indicated that in regards to closing Rodney Road, this option was initially considered during the planning stage of Phase 4. However, it did not receive a high level of support consequently there were no plans to consider this further.

Question 21 – Cllr Klara Sudbury asked when was the fourth quarter of 2020/21.

It was clarified that the fourth quarter would include the months of January, February, and March in 2021.

Question 23 – Cllr Klara Sudbury commented that whilst Clarence Street and Royal Well Road may have seen absolute reductions in traffic, previously most of that traffic would have gone through Boots Corner and not The Promenade, so the levels in those places could go down, whilst the amount of traffic could go up in The Promenade. She added that visibility was not good on The Promenade due to the taxi rank and large number of queueing buses. Cllr Sudbury asked if both CBC and

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GCC could work together to address those issues as a priority to help make The Promenade a more pleasant place for pedestrians.

The Lead Commissioner agreed that they would raise it with the Cabinet Member.

Question 27 – Cllr Klara Sudbury referred to the concerns raised around the impact of the scheme on local businesses. She questioned why the report was focussed more on the word of businesses that supported the scheme to put a case for the ETROs to be made permanent, rather than highlighting the number of shops that had already closed in Cheltenham.

In response, the Lead Commissioner indicated that the report took into account the overall scope of the trial and presented the findings accordingly. They added that at the site visit members had been able to see where there had been issues for some local business as a result of the trial.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

6.1 Four questions had been received. A copy of the questions and answers was circulated and was attached to the signed copy of the minutes.

6.1 Question 2 – Trevor Dumbleton referred to the number of formal representations received during the second round of consultation on Phase 4 and asked for a breakdown on how many were against/in favour of the scheme.

6.3 In response, the Lead Commissioner Community and Infrastructure confirmed that 159 formal representations had been received during the consultation on the amended ETROs. A total of 134 objections, 19 supportive, and 6 neutral (did not relate to the scheme at all).

7. CHELTENHAM TRANSPORT PLAN PHASE 4 - EXPERIMENTAL TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS

7.1 Member Site Visit

In response to the question raised by Cllr Kevin Cromwell during his site visit on 9 December 2019, Fraser Reid, Project Manager, explained that due to the short timescale involved, he had not been able to obtain data on Cheltenham General Hospital's growth since 2015, and therefore could not ascertain if there were any linkages between this and traffic growth on College Road.

The Committee Resolved

That the notes of the Member' Site Visit on 4 and 9 December 2019 be received as a correct record.

7.2 Scheme Promotor- Cheltenham Borough Council – Cllr Steve Jordan

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- 7.2.1 Cllr Steve Jordan, Leader of Cheltenham Borough Council, gave a detailed presentation to the Committee, aided by a PowerPoint presentation. *(For information: A copy of the presentation slides is included in the minute book and has been uploaded to the Council's website.)*
- 7.2.2 He informed the Committee that the concept of removing 'through traffic' from the town centre emerged as part of the Civic Pride Urban Design Framework within the Local Development Framework in 2008. This reflected a CBC ambition to reduce town centre traffic and specifically the 'severance' at Boots Corner, making the town centre a more pleasant inclusive environment, focused on walking, cycling and public transport access.
- 7.2.3 As part of the assessment process to test the potential impacts of removing traffic as part of the Phase 4 Boots Corner trial, Gloucestershire County Council as the Highway Authority built a 'Paramics' microsimulation traffic model. The results of this traffic modelling and the economic case formed the basis for Gloucestershire County Council's and Cheltenham Borough Council's successful bid to the DfT Local Sustainable Transport Fund in 2012. CBC and GCC had received over £600,000 from the DfT Local Sustainable Transport Fund in 2012 to undertake the Cheltenham Transport Plan (CTP) scheme.
- 7.2.4 Cllr Jordan informed members that each of the four phases of the CTP had been designed to loosen the grip of the ring road. He gave an overview of key changes made during Phase 1-3 of the CTP.
- 7.2.5 Phase 4 of the CTP, the Boots Corner trial, commenced on 28 June 2018 and was being undertaken by experimental traffic regulation orders (ETROs) that could run for a maximum period of 18 months period (the ETROs would expire on 28 December 2019). A series of amendments were made to the ETROs, as a result of the concerns and issues raised as part of the feedback received during the first 6 month consultation period. Those amendments were implemented on 3 June 2019 and a further six months consultation period was undertaken, ending on 3 December 2019.
- 7.2.6 In-depth public engagement had been carried out throughout the period of the trial. Gloucestershire County Council had focused on seeking responses on the traffic impacts and CBC on gaining an understanding of the wider impacts, including the effect on air quality and the economy.
- 7.2.7 The Committee was informed that CBC had undertaken a major piece of work 'Connecting Cheltenham', which had been produced to support GCC's Local Transport Plan which was currently being reviewed. This had looked at wider issues such as community transport, cycling and rail connectivity, thus providing alternatives to encourage a modal shift to more sustainable forms of transport.
- 7.2.8 Cllr Jordan informed the Committee that the results of the Cheltenham Residents' Survey 2019, showed that 84% of residents surveyed were satisfied with the local area and 82% would recommend Cheltenham as a place to live. He emphasised

that improving air quality was a top priority for the residents of Cheltenham. This was evidenced in the results as 75% of residents surveyed agreed that CBC should try to reduce vehicle emissions, believing that by reducing cars/traffic this would improve air quality.

- 7.2.9 Cllr Jordan explained that CBC had a statutory responsibility for monitoring air quality. Monitoring had continued throughout the implementation of the CTP at specific monitoring sites. In response to concerns raised about increased traffic volumes in certain roads, additional monitoring points had also been set up during the Phase 4 trial. The official air quality assessment had concluded that there had been no significant change in air quality in the town centre as a result of the Boots Corner trial.
- 7.2.10 Cllr Jordan informed the Committee that in the last 10 years there had been a decrease by 30% of people passing their driving test. Traffic volumes across Cheltenham had decreased overall by 20% over the past 10 years. The expectation was that this pattern would likely continue as a result of the modal shift overtime.
- 7.2.11 The Committee noted that information from Rupert Cox, Managing Director for Stagecoach West, indicated that the number of bus passenger journeys made across Cheltenham in the last 12 months was bucking the national trend - increasing by 4.3% (compared to a national decline of c2%). Cllr Jordan commented that the trial closure had benefited bus companies in terms of increased passenger journeys and improving bus punctuality. He anticipated that if the trial was made permanent, thus enabling the growth to continue, further improvements and investments would be made to bus services in Cheltenham.
- 7.2.12 The Committee was informed that footfall in Cheltenham was holding-up against the national picture, there was no sign of any decline in numbers to either the town centre or The Brewery Quarter. The BID report on High Street footfall showed that footfall in Cheltenham was up year-on-year in every month from April onwards. The town centre as a whole was up four of the last six months. The Brewery Quarter footfall was up 12.9% from last year's figure.
- 7.2.13 Cllr Jordan referred to the annual visitor statistics for Cheltenham, emphasising to members that over the last year, the number of day visitors had increased by 7% and the number of stay-over visitors had increased by 6%. Investment in the town centre was taking place, in particular there was a new offer to replace the old BHS unit in the Regent Arcade, and new office facilities had been developed at the Brewery Quarter and at other sites.
- 7.2.14 Cllr Jordan spoke positively about the results of the independent monitoring completed at the Boots Corner site. This determined that there had been a 185% increase in the number of cyclists; a 124% increase in pedestrians and a 125% increase in number of wheelchair/mobility scooters since the trial began.
- 7.2.15 Cllr Jordan emphasised to members that the evidence collected to date showed that Phase 4 of the CTP was encouraging a modal shift, with the data identifying an increase in people using more sustainable ways to travel. He indicated that less

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traffic going through the town centre would assist in providing a long-term improvement in the air quality. There was now a strong emphasis on tackling climate change and the resulting benefits of the trial were a real positive step in taking action in Cheltenham to tackle climate change.

7.2.16 Cllr Jordan informed the Committee that in light of all of the evidence and wider considerations, Cheltenham Borough Council, as the Scheme Promotor, gave a definitive position at its Cabinet meeting on 5 November 2019, when Cabinet members ruled in support of urging the GCC Traffic Regulation Committee and Cabinet to make the ETROS (Phase 4) of the CTP permanent.

7.2.17 In concluding his presentation Cllr Jordan reiterated all of the positive impacts on Cheltenham's environment and economy resulting from the trial closure of Boots Corner. He indicated to the Committee that, due to those reasons, the ETROs (Phase 4) of the CTP should now be made permanent.

7.3 Highway Authority – Gloucestershire County Council – The Lead Commissioner Community Infrastructure

7.3.1 The Lead Commissioner Community Infrastructure, gave a detailed presentation to the Committee aided by a PowerPoint presentation. *(For information: A copy of the presentation slides is included in the minute book and has been uploaded to the Council's website.)*

7.3.2 The Lead Commissioner began their presentation by informing members that they had lived in Cheltenham for over 20 years so knew the area well. They explained that whilst Cheltenham Borough Council was the Scheme Promoter, Gloucestershire County Council, as the Highways Authority, held the responsibility under statute for making the physical changes to the highway network.

7.3.3 They informed members that a total of 775 formal representations were received during the 6 months consultation period on the original ETROs Phase 4, Boots Corner trial (28 June 2018 - 31 May 2019). A series of changes were made to the ETROs, as a result of the feedback received during this consultation, specifically the number of blue badge holder bays and loading bays were increased, and amendments were made to the Bus Gate in Clarence Street/Clarence Parade.

7.3.4 Following the implementation of the amended ETROs, a further 6 month statutory consultation period was undertaken. This consultation period ended on 3 December 2019. A total of 159 formal representations were received (134 objections, 19 supportive, and 6 neutral (did not relate to the scheme at all)).

7.3.5 The Lead Commissioner reported that the changes made to the ETROs had made a significant difference in mitigating the concerns raised during the initial consultation period. If drivers missed the warning signs on the approach to the access restrictions, changes to the road layout now meant that they were now able to make a left turn to avoid the Bus Gate. The loading provisions on Pittville Street/The Promenade had also benefitted the local businesses by improving access.

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- 7.3.6 The Committee noted that the key themes of concern identified from the feedback received as part of the most recent consultation, included: traffic displacement to surrounding roads; air quality; no bypass or clear routes for motorists; the impact on businesses; buses and taxis still using Boots Corner and disabled parking.
- 7.3.7 Support for the scheme identified in the feedback received, centred on it being more desirable for pedestrians and shoppers; quieter roads for cyclists; more reliable bus services; good for air quality and it was helping to tackle climate change.
- 7.3.8 The Committee was informed that comprehensive transport monitoring of existing and new sites, within the town centre, had taken place during Phase 4. Whilst overall traffic volume had decreased, there were locations reporting significant growth in traffic; this was limited to St James' Square, Winchcombe Street South and St George's Road. The Lead Commissioner confirmed that there was no evidence of net displacement of traffic into outer areas.
- 7.3.9 The Lead Commissioner advised the Committee that whilst overall the Phase 4 trial had benefited Cheltenham, he recognised that there were some issues which would need to be addressed if the ETROs were made permanent. They explained that as Phase 4 of the CTP had been implemented on a trial basis, this had prevented any significant investment into solutions to mitigate the key concerns.
- 7.3.10 They reported that the options for mitigation measures included investment in traffic signals for the ring road; traffic calming on Rodney Road; clearer route signage for motorists; segregated cycle lanes and the introduction of a 20mph through Boots Corner and the central area.
- 7.3.11 They advised members that the scheme was an important stepping stone to a greater model shift, but there was still more to do to address the challenge of making Cheltenham town centre a more pleasant environment, more focused on pedestrians and cycling and accessible to public transport.
- 7.3.12 The Lead Commissioner concluded their presentation by advising the Committee of the options for its recommendation to the GCC Cabinet.
- 7.3.13 A member referred to the increase in footfall and questioned whether more could be done to enforce the speed limits through the town centre to make it safer for pedestrians and cyclists. In response, the Committee was informed that GCC officers worked closely with the Police to ensure speed limits were enforced. Monitoring had determined that speeds were within the required range. Ultimately an introduction of a 20mph speed limit would require Police support.
- 7.2.14 A member raised the point that some of the roads being used as alternative routes, were narrow, residential roads and completely unsuitable for increased traffic levels. The Lead Commissioner recognised that there were flaws to the scheme and that this was one of the issues which would need to be addressed if the ETROs were made permanent. Consideration would need to be given as to how significant

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the traffic increase was on those roads, specifically if it went beyond the growth threshold of 20% and then potential solutions to mitigate this growth would need to be examined.

7.3.15 A member questioned whether there had been an increase in vehicle collisions involving pedestrians/cyclists, in the town centre, since the trial began. In response, the Committee was informed that data from the GCC Road Safety Team showed there had been a similar, or a reduced amount of collisions, when compared with previous years.

7.3.16 A member asked what other measures would be taken to make the town centre more focused on pedestrians and cycling and more accessible to public transport. In response, the Committee was informed that there were other steps yet to be taken to make the town centre a more pleasant environment. These included enhanced signage to enable motorists to navigate around the town centre more effectively, thus reducing traffic coming into the town centre. This would in turn have a positive impact on air quality. Bus services had become more reliable and it was likely that new services would be introduced as the modal shift continued.

7.4 Cheltenham Borough Councillors

The following Cheltenham Borough Councillors addressed the Committee:

Objecting:

7.4.1 Cllr Kara Sudbury, Cheltenham Borough Councillor for the College Ward and Gloucestershire County Councillor for Cheltenham: Charlton Park division

"I object to the ETROs being made permanent and unfortunately do not believe the amended scheme has adequately addressed all the many problems the scheme has generated.

Closing Boots Corner to all traffic is not a fundamentally bad idea but it requires three things to make it work:

- 1) Full pedestrianisation at Boots Corner;*
- 2) Alternative routes created to take through traffic around and not through Cheltenham; and*
- 3) serious investment in cycling and walking infrastructure and lower bus fares as well as addressing where buses and taxis can drop off and pick up from.*

Noticeably in the pedestrianised areas of places like Gloucester or Cardiff, buses and taxis are not allowed.

The changes at Boots Corner are the sort of fudge that promises a tasty treat but when you take a bite you realise the recipe is a bit off.

Traffic reduced at Boots Corner, has made it slightly nicer but with many taxis, buses, exempt vehicles and cyclists travelling through the area, pedestrians still

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have to have their wits about them. The pedestrian crossing must not be removed if the trial is made permanent with the levels of traffic moving through.

Cycling – no investment in protected routes to get to the town centre and other routes more congested less pleasant for cyclists to use. Vulnerability of pedestrians with more people cycling on high street and The Promenade I have had a number of close shaves myself.

Key themes in the formal representations is that reducing traffic at Boots Corner has diverted traffic into residential areas, but the report does not accept most of these concerns, let alone specify how they will all be addressed.

Displaced traffic has made many other parts of the town less pleasant to be in as a pedestrian, including the Rodney Road/High Street/Winchcombe Street route, St James' Square/Ambrose Street/St George's Road route, St Luke's and College Road area. Meanwhile the area where so few people live on Royal Well Road and Clarence Street have much reduced congestion and pollution and much less footfall adversely affecting businesses there.

Concern about long term health impact for people living in streets which have become more congested as well as concern on wellbeing of more noise and vibration from traffic.

Our beautiful Promenade is much more congested with through traffic using that route to get to Rodney Road and onwards north, it would be a much better space to pedestrianise to boost the town centre than Boots Corner ever could be and cause much less traffic problems everywhere else.

It is not clear how much money that has been earmarked for mitigation is left or how it will be spent. It seems that the traffic monitoring that has been done is being used to justify doing the absolute minimum to help residents affected by increased congestion to save money.

I am a county and borough councillor for part of Boots Corner, also areas affected such as Rodney Road and St Luke's and have raised repeated concerns.

Formal representations - while there are some supportive comments, these are mainly very short, rarely specifying exactly why they support the ETROs, and are outnumbered many times over by those raising concerns. Even some of the supportive comments come with caveats about concerns of displaced traffic on other roads.

Difficult to see how Rodney Road/High St/Winchcombe St issues can successfully be resolved without diverting more traffic to St George's Street or St Luke's.

Finally, and most importantly the impact on disabled people. From speaking with people with visual, physical and mental health disabilities it is clear they feel marginalised by the trial and also the way the process has excluded them. The blue badge parking that was previously available on The Promenade near to WH

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Smiths which includes the Post Office and Boots, as well as the disabled parking on Pittville Street which enabled blue badge holders to shop at M&S has been replaced elsewhere but for those who have mobility issues or other health issues the new spaces are too far away. For those who can walk short distances it is important to maintain independence and dignity that they are enabled to park close to the shops they need to visit.

Regrettably for the reasons above I believe it is in the best interests of Cheltenham to abandon the ETROs and not revisit the plans until they can be implemented properly and issues of concern addressed and not ignored.”

7.4.2 Cllr Matt Babbage, Cheltenham Borough Councillor for Battledown and Gloucestershire County Councillor for Battledown and Charlton Kings

(Speech summarised)

Cllr Matt Babbage contended that the objective of closing Boots Corner to reduce pollution levels and help tackle climate change was a nonsense argument; no significant evidence had been provided that this objective had been achieved.

Traffic was being displaced to the surrounding narrow residential roads not suitable for increased traffic levels. He stressed that the volume of slow moving and stationary traffic would increase air pollution in those roads and adversely affect the lives of residents.

He urged the Committee to recommend that the scheme be abandoned.

7.4.3 Cllr Chris Mason, Cheltenham Borough Councillor for Lansdown

“As a ward councillor for an area adversely affected by the closure of Boots Corner, I would like to thank the Committee for allowing me to address them.

Why was Boots Corner closed? One reason given was to reduce CO2 levels but before the closure this was not an issue. I believe it was a Borough Council Cabinet member who suggested it was part of an agreement with the developers of The Brewery. Let us not forget that shoppers will still need to use the pedestrian crossing to get across North St safely. Accordingly, traffic free access from the Higher to Lower High Street is not a justification for the closure.

Since the closure residents have noticed an increased level in traffic on their streets. In Lansdown there has been an increased level in St George’s Place and this spills out into St James’ Square, Ambrose Street and St George’s Square. This is particularly noticeable on the roundabouts at Knapp Road and the Lower High Street. I believe the Head of St Gregory’s School has raised concerns for the safety of children walking to school.

In addition to my ward there has been an increase in traffic along Rodney Road. This has made it very difficult to walk along the High Street by Barclays Bank. I have personally seen frustrated drivers push out into pedestrians trying to cross the

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High Street to get into John Lewis. Any attempts to further restrict access along Rodney Road will only increase the levels of traffic in our residential areas, whether they be Lansdown, The College or All Saints.

Just like water, traffic will flow along the routes of least resistance. Before the closure of Boots Corner traffic travelling south to north followed a route mainly avoiding non-residential areas. Since the closure, traffic now uses the surrounding residential areas, causing umpteen jams and increasing CO2 levels. Of particular concern is the fact that CO2 levels in Cheltenham's residential areas were not established before the closure. Accordingly, there are no important benchmarks that can be used to compare the current situation.

Whatever the reasons for the closure of Boots Corner. The majority of Cheltenham's residents did not ask for it, do not want it now and will not want it in the future. The petition signed by 6,000 residents proves this. Accordingly, I would urge the Committee to recommend that Boots Corner is opened, thus allowing traffic to flow more freely and reduce the pressure in the surrounding residential areas."

Supporting:

7.4.4 Cllr Roger Whyborn, Cheltenham Borough Councillor for Up Hatherley

"This scheme should never have become this controversial, it should have been done 30 years ago. It is being done very late, but better late than never. There really ought to be more to follow - with the intention of both removing private cars from the town centre, and in combination with an integrated transport hub to which CBC is already committed, to provide a more joined up bus network with easy interchanges between routes and with cycling and walking.

But with what has been trialled for over a year now, we have seen an increase in public transport use in Cheltenham and a corresponding reduction in car use. That there are one or two congestion areas to sort out, which others will no doubt highlight, is not disputed, but the overall emissions of both particulate and gases must be down because of the modal shift in travel habits, which has already taken place. This is vitally important given major concerns about climate emergency, which I hope we all share.

I appreciate that the Committee will be mainly focused on the traffic flow and road safety, and my understanding from officers is that the trial is considered successful in these terms. But a factor I would like to emphasise is the much better street environment for pedestrians, especially for shoppers when crossing Boots Corner. It's a real joy to shop there now. We must do this if want the High Street to be a good environment, otherwise we will see it suffer the same fate as other towns. Clearly the actual environment of the area can and should be improved by a better public realm, but CBC can only start on this once GCC agree the scheme.

I fully anticipate in the course of this afternoon, that there will be a smallish number of real transport issues which Committee need to pick up in the mitigation package,

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surrounded by a huge number of complaints from naysayers that life as we know it has come to an end. The Committee should not give too much weight to them. In truth, if we are going to both provide a vibrant High Street, and address climate emergency, change is going to be necessary, and change can often be painful.

Finally, I would like to hope for a better pedestrian crossing at Boots Corner, for it is now disruptive in its present form. Would the Committee please ponder that?

I urge the Committee to recommend making the scheme permanent and ultimately fulfil the original Civic Pride vision going back to 2008.”

7.5 Public Representations

The following people addressed the Committee:

Objecting:

7.5.1 Chris Nelson - Local resident

“Cheltenham Conservatives have watched the Boots Corner scheme develop from the start and we remain unconvinced that it is working. Yet we support the theory of full pedestrianisation in town centres, as that can create a pleasant environment to shop and live – as long as commuters are given sensible alternative routes, car park charges are reasonable and bus services are cheap and regular.

Yet the Boots Corner scheme has been poorly thought through. The Borough Council has always been short on vision. Creating a shared space in the centre of the town, where taxis and buses mingle with pedestrians is an accident waiting to happen, particularly for disabled and vulnerable people. Rodney Road, just outside the front entrance of John Lewis, is an especially dangerous shared space.

The Borough Council should have ensured the building of a bypass to the west of the town before even thinking about closing the only highway through the centre of town. Without such a bypass, it is extreme folly to force 11,000 daily commuters to find alternative routes through the town. I simply do not believe the officer’s report which talks about a maximum one minute delay to journey times. I have lived in Cheltenham for the last 20 years and the rush hour congestion caused by Boots Corner on roads such as Winchcombe Street South – experiencing 73% traffic growth, way beyond the 20% ‘threshold figure’ - is unacceptable.

Local residents and commuters impacted by this change regularly complain yet no one listens. This is why we do not have as many objectors here as I would have hoped, as too many incorrectly believe this whole Committee procedure has already been decided behind closed doors. Will this Committee listen? The Borough Council has already ignored a 6,000 strong petition objecting to this controversial scheme and showed scant respect to the public when that petition forced a full Council meeting. While big business is pandered to, small and independent run businesses in the centre of town have also been ignored. The Lib

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Dem run Borough Council arrogantly ignores the democratic process. Will this Committee do likewise? We certainly hope not.

Our Conservative run County Council was an unwilling partner to this half-baked scheme and wisely insisted that it was implemented as a trial rather than made permanent at the start. This was to allow time to test whether the scheme would work. From all of our research, most of the town do not like Boots Corner and want it to be re-opened. It was a real issue in the General Election.

So we ask this Committee to listen please to the 1,000 objections on your website, the 6,000 petition to CBC, the regular objections on social media, the noisy public meetings of frustration, to all those demonstrating and objecting today, and help the public restore its confidence in Local Government by recommending that this trial should be stopped and Boots Corner re-opened immediately. It would be a wonderful Christmas present for the town."

7.5.2 Roger Fox - Local resident

"My wife and I live in Leckhampton. Unfortunately she suffers from MS and her movement is seriously hampered by this disease. She is unable to drive anymore and uses a walker to enable her to stand and walk. Since the closure of Boots Corner we have had to curtail our shopping trips into central Cheltenham.

Before the closure we travelled north through Boots Corner, onto North Street, right into Albion Street and right again into Pittville Street where sometimes we found disabled parking. We were able to access M&S and WH Smith. Both these shops were important to us. If we were not able to find disabled parking space I dropped my wife off for a short while and she did the necessary shopping. This was particularly important at WH Smith because they must have the best range of greetings cards in the town and my wife sends a lot. M&S was also important to us for a range of goods and food. Afterwards we drove around the one way system, back around to Albion Street and home.

Since the closure of Boots Corner the businesses we used are no longer accessible.

For the meeting I need to record that my wife's physical movement is just not strong enough for us to park further away.

It is also the case that disabled parking spaces seem to be constantly full and some roads, e.g. Rodney Road, are difficult to walk along because of scaffolding and building work etc.

In conclusion, we believe that disabled people should have the possibility to do everything a fully fit person can do. No local authority should ever impose restrictions on where its citizens can access in its public space. It is discriminatory and in theory discriminatory behaviour is unacceptable."

7.5.3 Helen Howe - Local resident

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“My name is Helen Howe and for the past decade I have been co owner and restaurant manager of Lumiere restaurant on Clarence Parade (one of the top 100 fine dining restaurants in the country), I am a Cheltenham town centre resident and a board member of Cheltenham BID.

I am here today to object to making Phase 4 of the CTP permanent; my objection is two-fold both as a local resident and as a business owner.

I don't believe significant research into the impact of the trial on local businesses has been carried out by the Council in order to make sure that this trial is not detrimental. I appreciate that collating this data is very difficult but that is why the objections that you hear today from a number of independent businesses should be taken so seriously. As independent businesses we are in the enviable position to be able to share our figures and opinions without having to gain head office, finance and PR approval and have given up our precious time to do so. As independent business owners, we are the people who are most invested in making Cheltenham the very best it can be – our livelihoods are based here, we own properties here, we can't just take a job elsewhere should Cheltenham start to lose its sphere of influence. We have no ulterior motivation in our objections which is why you should take our concerns so seriously.

I know that the trial has proven detrimental to business across town as it is negatively impacting our customers who have to travel into Cheltenham and it is putting them off making regular visits into town.

Worryingly these missing customers all fall into a very similar category – they are affluent, Cotswold based and have 20-60 minutes' drive time to Cheltenham. We know a lot of these customers very well so I have spoken to them about what's going on – and their response is that they have simply stopped making regular visits to Cheltenham because of the trial and are choosing to go elsewhere. We now see them 3/4 times a year for special occasions rather than previously every three or four weeks for a routine trip. So, whilst this is costing our business around £30,000 per annum, it is costing Cheltenham as a whole so much more.

Cheltenham is in a great position to encourage visitors to the town but if the town is not accessible when they get here they will not return, and I believe that visiting customers' perception of Cheltenham has been negatively affected by the trial.

We use a third party booking system at the restaurant, each customer is sent a follow up survey by the booking company following their reservation. These customers are typically our visiting customers rather than regulars. We score top marks across the board and still do apart from the location. Prior to the trial our location score was 4.9/5 almost as soon as the trial began our location dropped to 3.2/5 which is where it remains despite the June alterations. I have no other explanation for this other than the effect of the trial.

On a personal note, I have concerns regarding the formal representation process – despite numerous emails to Democratic Services I have not been provided with adequate evidence that the process is working.

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Ultimately, I don't believe that the trial has fulfilled the aims set out 18 months ago and therefore should be rejected today. Thank you for your time."

7.5.4 Alan McDougall - Local resident

"Cheltenham Borough Council has a single-minded view regarding the closure of Boots Corner to general traffic and that is to support and prioritise the increased financial value of the Municipal Building and Royal Well area for commercial development.

CBC has failed the business community in that their baseline strategy is to work almost exclusively with major developers at the expense of other national and smaller local businesses/retailers. They herald the arrival of John Lewis and the 'success' of The Brewery Quarter and use data exclusive to these operators, yet have failed to understand or present any facts that the High Street is fuelled by largely unsustainable debt. These businesses struggle due to high fixed costs, the debt they are carrying, not to mention massive overcapacity, and major falls in profits, which in many cases is considerably less than 4%, means they cannot repay debt or invest in growth. This High Street model currently supported by CBC and major developers is outdated and not future proofed.

CBC has failed as it promotes rosy footfall statistics between the opposite ends of Cheltenham High Street, but does not account for the recent access point cut through to the High Street from The Brewery or the national success of the John Lewis brand. Nor account for any increases due to customer migration away from The Promenade. This once smart avenue, which currently boasts 40 units in operation has 13 units either empty or about to become so. That is 25% since the closure of Boots Corner in the short space of 18 months. Likewise, Montpellier Street/Walk has a similar problem with six/seven units.

In the real world 'Retail is selling things that don't come back to customers who do'.

CBC has failed by the fact it choose to put pedestrians at greater risk in the High Street by ignoring the Government moratorium on shared spaces, whereas Boots Corner has a safe pedestrian crossing and CBC's policy does not exclude taxis or buses. Proposed new vehicles, despite being upgraded to Euro5/Euro6 standards are still fossil fuel diesel based and do not match the greater benefits of hybrid and/or electric vehicles.

CBC has also failed in their claims having justified the closure based on a significant reduction in traffic flows and reduced NO2 levels. As this is limited to a few visitor based central streets they cannot argue for the project's clean air 'success' at the expense of all other surrounding residential areas. Despite arbitrary 'acceptable' increased toxic levels of 20% any level of subsequent increase is totally unacceptable in these streets.

The CTP, appendix 3 air quality, (2019.11.05) report concludes: 'the scheme was not explicitly designed as a project to improve air quality'.

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Clarence Square/St Paul's Road has reported increased traffic flows of 15% with resultant increases in NO2 levels, which will further increase on these and all residential streets by way of 'switched on' Sat Navs should the scheme become permanent.

CBC's ill-constructed brief to GCC for this closure is misguided, misdirected, misleading and is a failure for future retail and local businesses, pedestrian safety and the overall health of the town's residents."

7.5.5 Jacob Wilson - Local resident

"Ladies and Gentleman, boys and girls, esteemed members of the Traffic Regulation Committee.

I stand here as a disappointed and frustrated resident of Cheltenham.

I'm disappointed that we've got so far on the Boots Corner closure, despite so much opposition, despite the thousands of signatures collected against the closure and despite all our objections to those supposed to represent us.

The release of the dodgy dossier, if you will, further adds to these concerns. They talk about encouraging individuals to ditch their car for journeys around Cheltenham - yet instead of investing in cycle lanes and empowering individuals, they take a heavy handed approach designed to restrict the choice of the individual.

They talk about reducing pollution and taking action of climate change, but all they've done is put that pollution onto residential streets. All this talk about climate change appears to be one giant virtue signal.

Their methods are flawed. In their summary of 24 hours 2 way traffic flows though sites across Cheltenham before and after closure, they only measure a 24 hours period which leaves a huge margin for error - this is not missed by the residents of Cheltenham who see this increased traffic every day.

Their Bluetooth journey times only collects 5% of journeys and only work with comparable cars. This is wholly non representative of the Cheltenham traffic and it may only collect data from the nicest cars, possibly on the way to Waitrose.

Successful local businesses are the key to a prosperous and vibrant town. They provide employment to locals and invest in education and training, provide our goods and services. Creating an environment to allow business to flourish would, naturally, be a priority of any council.

So, when the closure resulted in the majority of businesses surveyed reporting a drop in turnover, why are we still considering going ahead?

The closure of the corner restricts individuals' choices, damages businesses and doesn't achieve what it sets out to do.

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I remain a disappointed Cheltenham resident.”

7.5.6 James Wellings - Local resident

(Speech summarised)

Mr Wellings explained that he had worked in Cheltenham for over 25 years. His business Chameleons Hair Salon was located on the corner of 28 Clarence Street and 27 Clarence Parade on Clarence Street.

He described how he had observed large lorries dangerously reversing down the one-way street to avoid the Bus Gate. He had personally witnessed many near misses between vehicles and pedestrians.

He stressed that his business had lost customers and staff as a direct result of the closure. He felt that the scheme was placing more emphasis on appeasing the big businesses, but stressed “that it was unfair to rob Peter to pay Paul”.

He urged the Committee to recommend that the trial be abandoned.

7.5.7 Stephan Fifield- Local resident

“Dear members of the Traffic Regulation Committee, I want to raise the issue of trust and competence and why you, as the TRC, should be hesitant to support a proposal which has gathered this level of igno-miny over the past few years.

I live on Pittville Circus and I have been concerned about the closure since 2017. It was clear then, as it is now, that the closure of Boots Corner was going to reduce the quality of life for Pittville’s residents like myself. It looked inevitable that more traffic would be pushed down residential areas such as Clarence Road that already suffer from overuse.

I subsequently ran a survey across Pittville, asking if residents supported the closure. I received hundreds of replies and 80% of residents responded against the proposal. This level of public disapproval has also been revealed in the two initial TRO consultations. With local businesses, there has been widespread scepticism with several surveys showing overwhelming opposition to the change - and who can blame them?

Since the closure, 25% of retail space on The Promenade has become empty, or is about to be empty.

Lord Holmes who has written a highly esteemed report about the dangers of shared spaces, has publicly called for the Council to stop the plan.

We have even had a local Headmistress, in the local press, showing her concern that the closure will inevitably put her pupils at risk.

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So how has the Borough Council responded to this disapproval?

At every stage of the implementation, the Borough Council has prevaricated, hurled insults, and even deployed astroturf to distract and avoid answering difficult questions. The Mayor has given us a sublime example of this today. They have also refused to accept any sincere opposition to the proposal.

Councillor McKinley has repeatedly treated residents with contempt and Pittville Councillor Dennis Parson has called anybody who opposed the closure 'Totally Deluded'.

It's obvious that the Borough Council has taken a "contra mundum" mentality to the closure. In other words, they have hunkered themselves so deep within the bunker, they've forgotten where the door is.

All this has achieved is a hardening of the opposition, souring of the atmosphere and made the chances of reconciliation even slighter. And the question must be asked, why? Why such a defensive response for a supposedly benign and evidential attempt to rejuvenate the high street?

It is the suspicion of many local residents, that the Borough Council has motives which have not been disclosed to the public. Whether its sights are set on developing the rear of the Municipal Building, or that certain promises have been made to The Brewery, we can not know for sure. But what we do know, is that if there is any dirty laundry yet to be aired, it will inevitably end up in the County Council's basket.

Whenever I have spoken to borough councillors in favour of the closure, they have always been enthusiastically willing to blame the County Council for any faults with the closure.

TRC, if you approve this closure, you will be inadvertently putting yourself up as the Borough Council's canon fodder. You will be blamed for this proposal and you will be blamed for its consequences. I trust that you will make the right decision.

And while I haven't received a red card yet for my submission, I do hope you will be showing one to the Borough Council today.

Thank you."

7.5.8 Michael Evans - Local Resident,

(Speech summarised)

Mr Evans stated that he fully supported the objectors who had already spoken at the meeting. He pointed out to the Committee that many of those who had spoke in objection to the scheme were experts in their field and also knew the true picture of what was happening in Cheltenham.

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7.5.9 Oliver Lewis - Local resident

(Speech summarised)

He urged the Committee to recommend that the Boots Corner trial be abandoned as it was not meeting its objectives and its flaws were only being clearly highlighted to the Committee today. He put it to the Committee that the flaws of the scheme completely outweighed any benefits.

He referred to traffic displacement and congestion in the surrounding residential roads and expressed deep concerns about how the resulting air pollution may be impacting on the residents' health as they went about their daily lives. He said he was confused as to why polluting busses were still allowed to go through Boots Corner when a key aim of the scheme was to improve air quality in the town centre.

He described the roads that were being used as alternative routes, as being residential, narrow and not physically suitable for the increased levels of traffic.

He stressed that the trial was having a negative effect on surrounding businesses; drivers were finding it an inconvenience to access the town whilst having to avoid the Bus Gate. He was concerned about the sheer number of people indicating that they no longer came into the town because of the effect of the Boots Corner trial.

He suggested that the fundamental question the Committee now faced was whether the scheme, as it stood, would encourage the flourishing of the town centre, or the opposite.

He asked the Committee to object to the reopening of Boots Corner and suggest a review of the trial, for the benefit of the town and its people.

7.5.10 Michael Stanway – Local resident

“Cheltenham has the problem that it has main routes running through the town. There is no easy way to route around the town due to the topography and roads currently available. Closing Boots Corner permanently will only make that problem more acute.

However, my concerns are directed towards the suitability and safety of the routes which are being used by traffic to avoid Boots Corner.

If this road had been closed for resurfacing, an alternative route for traffic, checked by the Council for suitability and safety, and published widely, would have been prepared.

This was not the case and those present will remember the phrase ‘traffic will find its own route’ was used regularly by those proposing the closure. Drivers have, indeed, found alternative routes but many would argue that these are neither suitable nor safe.

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A little bit of history. Some may remember the Nimrod accident in Afghanistan some 10, or so, years ago and the subsequent Haddon-Cave Inquiry. That Inquiry changed the way that the approach to the identification and acceptance of risk was carried out. No longer is it acceptable to wait until something happens before taking steps to avoid it happening again.

Organisations are required to look at any system or process and identify any hazards associated with that system or process prior to it becoming operational. This safety management plan will include a section on change management and it's this that applies to the closure of Boots Corner.

Once a hazard has been identified, all associated risks need to be considered and mitigation measures put in place, if necessary, to reduce those risks to as low as reasonably practicable, ALARP a widely accepted term. Once mitigation measures have been decided, the residual risk needs to be accepted by the risk owner; in this case that would be GCC.

In this case, among others, risks to the public, to infrastructure, to other road users, to the environment need to be considered plus the effects of the weather.

As the Council were not aware of the routes drivers would choose to avoid Boots Corner then this risk assessment cannot have taken place. The routes in use cannot be shown to have acceptable risks.

Following the publication of the Haddon-Cave Inquiry, I was serving at the RAF HQ at High Wycombe and I prepared the first draft of the RAF Safety Management Plan following training in Safety Management by Cranfield University. I am currently Safety Manager for a Flying Training Organisation and provide advice to Military and civilian organisations on safety management. I also run a number of air displays in the UK and overseas including the RAF display at Cosford

I say this not to blow my own trumpet but merely to show that I have some knowledge of these safety requirements."

7.5.11 Philip Chambers – Local resident

"I speak as a person who has spent 10 years as a manager of two industrial research and development companies and since then as a Chartered Health and Safety Practitioner.

I will start by saying that this should not be referred to as closing Boots Corner but as the closure of the inner ring road, i.e. an arterial route. Unfortunately, Cheltenham does not have outer ring roads like Gloucester, concentric in some places.

My concerns that are constrained by the allowed time of this are:

Air Quality

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Improving air quality was one of the 4 objectives of Phase 4, arguably the only one that can be measured.

I understand that air quality data has not been available to this Committee in time for this meeting, which I regard as a major concern.

The January to October 2019 NOx data published by Cheltenham Borough Council shows some high peaks (highlighted as magenta in the spreadsheet) in the first quarter of 2019 at 2 Gloucester Road and 422 High Street, which is logical given the observed traffic levels. They already were a problem in 2018 but the inner ring closure has meant that this is an alternative route. I personally can't draw the conclusion from these data that there is a slow decline in exceedance as stated in 10.13 route.

Of concern is that the Clarence Parade data has been missing since July 2018. It is stunning that no NOx data has been collected by Boots/Primark before or since the closure.

Safety of alternative routes

The crossing by Boots and Primark is inherently safe with a light-controlled crossing and pedestrians crossing at 90 degrees to the traffic. The route chosen by some via Rodney Road and the shared pedestrian/vehicle/cycle section of the High Street is inherently dangerous with pedestrians crossing the road with their backs to the traffic. There have been serious accidents in this area as listed in table 1. Note that the fatal accident in Clarence Street was at a point now subject to 2-way traffic flow.

Questionability of the data

The journey times reported under 5.28 don't reflect that which may be easily observed and I therefore have a question mark about the methodology for gathering these data. The September results must be ignored because all but one show a distinctive fall in journey times compared with earlier months with no explanation as to why that should be.

The only route as an alternative to the inner ring is C – St George's Road to St Margaret's Road labelled as Saints Corridor is now about 12 minutes. St George's Street typically takes 7 minutes to travel 175m. There are 7 bends on this route with stop-starts which must add to the pollution when compared with the 2 bends before the closure. However, there is no air quality data to assess this.

Damage to tourism

After the initial closure, fines were about 2000 per week (i.e. 100,000 per year). They've now dropped to about 100 per day (i.e. 36,000 per year). With a combined population in the Cheltenham-Bishops Cleeve area of 220,000 there aren't that many drivers. Therefore the people now being fined are visitors. There is no evidence as claimed in 3.4 of the report that people are using cars for short journeys. A recent report put the tourism business at £162 million/year and actions that discourage this must be avoided. It is interesting to note that the rate of fines dropped after the June 2019 change and I would attribute the previous high level of

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fines to the poor signage in Royal Well; at least people have got a get-out route after they pass Yates Wine Lodge.”

7.5.12 Ian Wellings – Local resident

“I am the proud freehold owner of a five floor regency building on the corner of 28 Clarence Street and 27 Clarence Parade, I am also proprietor of Chameleons Hair Salon which has occupied three floors of that building for 24 years. I am too a landlord to a shop unit at 27 Clarence Parade, this is at present occupied by Spa Vapes.

So as you can see I have committed myself to Cheltenham. As a landlord I am asking for the reopening of Boots Corner, the reason? You only have to look around as more and more shops close for good and more will follow. Most shops in the centre of town are leased, which means that the tenant is committed to continue to pay the rent until the end of the lease – shop trading or not, so there will be many shops waiting until their lease expires to close their doors for good, I know of a few.

These shops are the lifeblood of Cheltenham they are what make it different from any other town, they take hard work to open and make thrive, and with the ever increasing threat of the internet and online shopping we require the Council to encourage shoppers into the centre of our town.

Let them drive slowly through the centre, let them see the beautiful shops and buildings and then they might choose to stop and shop.

The alternative at the moment is that they are pushed around the small and crowded largely residential streets, where they get frustrated by long detours and queues, so that they go elsewhere next time, and I’m not counting the ones we have lost for good by stinging them with massive fines for driving through badly or misleadingly signed roads.

As the owner of Chameleons Hair Salon, I have the time to listen to many of my customers who come to town from some distances – Upton-Upon-Severn, Worcester, Yate, even mid Wales, they complain most strongly about what has been done. I have lost many loyal customers and staff directly as a result of this scheme.

We may still be able to have a vibrant town if we encourage visitors to visit from outside as we have in the past, Cheltenham is a beautiful spa town chock a block with listed buildings – plastic grass and ugly planters, bright green car shaped bike racks do not belong here!

Moreover the current road plan is extremely dangerous, on a daily basis we see (and have video footage of) large lorries even car transporters trying to make the left turn from Clarence Parade into Clarence Street and vice versa some even reverse back along Clarence Parade because the turn is impossible for them. I predict that if this isn’t stopped someone will inevitably lose their life to this foolishness.

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I have closed the salon today, just over a week before Christmas so strong are my feelings about this so we, my son and I can be here to tell you what we feel and what we know, but there are so many traders who cannot take that time off this close to Christmas, so for everyone you see here today we represent many that cannot.

Do not cut the artery to the heart of this town – re-open Boots Corner.”

(At this juncture -12.30 pm, the meeting was adjourned for a lunch break. The meeting reconvened at 1.30 pm.)

7.5.13 Alex Chalk - MP for Cheltenham

(Speech summarised)

Mr Chalk contended that the green argument was contradictory as the anecdotal evidence tended to suggest that motorists were having to travel further on their journeys around the town centre to avoid the Bus Gate. He emphasised that in order to make the green argument that the scheme was good for the environment, then it needed to be shown overall there was less fuel being burnt; however, he had not seen any evidence to back this. He spoke about being a keen cyclist, but stressed that the pro-cycling argument did not stack up, as buses and taxis could still travel through Boots Corner. He indicated that segregated cycle ways were needed.

He emphasised that the closure had had a negative impact on the daily lives of many residents and local businesses in the town centre. He declared that the scheme had gone on for too long, caused too much disruption, and for those reasons it should be put out of its misery and abandoned.

7.5.14 David Fahey - Local resident

“Good morning, my name is David Fahey, MD of a local company located in The Promenade, I am objecting today both as a business owner and resident of Cheltenham. The closure of Boots Corner has caused chaos in our town, resulting in massive disruption to people travelling into and through Cheltenham, to local people living in roads that are now full of slow moving cars spewing fumes into the atmosphere, to businesses who have saw a big decrease in footfall.

As a business owner I used to be proud to invite associates, clients and suppliers to Cheltenham, all of whom would comment on what a beautiful town we have and how lucky I am to have offices here. Now their comments are universally negative, starting with ‘sorry the reason I am late is traffic’ how confusing is the one-way system, that they can’t find anywhere to park.

A frequent question asked is why isn’t there signage to guide people, I suspect that the reason is the Council don’t have a clue where to send people as there isn’t an

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alternative viable route. Now when I arrange meetings I travel to their offices or meet them at motorway services.

I have lost count of the number of people who have said they will never come back to Cheltenham.

Our Council have said the reason behind the closure of Boots corner is an environmental one, in reality they have caused an environmental disaster. Previously, I would park in The Promenade, do my shopping in M&S and drive round to collect it, this was a journey of 0.33 of a mile and took approximately 90 seconds, now it is 1.4 miles in distance to get to the same place. I now drive to M&S in Kingsditch to do my shopping, a round trip of 11 miles.

Before Boots Corner was closed traffic flowed through on a constant basis, albeit slowly, and if you accept that 7 cars a minute travelled through on average that would equate to 420 cars an hour, or approximately 10,000 vehicles in a 24 hour period.

Assuming that these vehicle movements still have to take place and that the additional distance they have travelled in 1 mile, that equals 10,000 extra miles a day; 300,000 miles a month; 3,650,000 miles per year. How is that good for the environment or for anybody?

CBC say that there is a 109% increase in bicycle usage in the town, they have added 18 bike stands, so we have an extra 18 bikes being used to offset 3.65M miles of exhaust fumes.

If the intention of CBC is to destroy the town centre they are well on their way to achieving it. The number of empty shops grows each month, you only have to look at The Promenade opposite the Council offices to see the effect their idiotic scheme is having, empty shops and a constant queue of traffic as people battle to find somewhere to park or a route through town.

Closing Boots Corner to everyday commuters has effectively cut Cheltenham in half and for what reason?

I do not know a single person who believes this to be a good idea, I have spoken to taxi and bus drivers, who you would think would approve of it but they hate it. Traffic congestion around the town centre causes long delays to them and their passengers, they also say how dangerous Boots Corner has become.

People incorrectly believe the area is pedestrianised and walk out in front of buses and taxis. It is an accident waiting to happen.

It is intrinsically unsafe to call it pedestrianised when it is open to buses, taxis, bikes and emergency vehicles.

There are no benefits whatsoever from the closure of Boots Corner and I suspect the only reason CBC continue saying it is a success is because of their revenue

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they make from confused drivers. Either that or they are too arrogant to accept they have made a monumental mistake which the residents and businesses of Cheltenham are suffering for.

In summary, the closure of Boots Corner is bad for business, bad for Cheltonians, bad for visitors, is a safety hazard and is especially bad for the environment. We have one last chance to throw this ludicrous scheme out and to try and breath life back into our dying high street.”

7.5.15 James Allen – Local resident

“I am from the forgotten ward of Pittville, an area which now finds itself cut off as part of this north south divide, which has been put in place without any viable alternative. I am not one of the many businesses who are suffering from this scheme although I sympathise with them greatly, I am an ordinary resident with a story whose cost is priceless. I am only trying to go about my daily life but more importantly my priority as a single parent. So, with a very personal view, I am here to represent my 4 year old son Hugo, who cannot be here as he has been called to urgent nativity rehearsals.

Hugo was 2 when Boots Corner was closed, before this time dropping him off at his nursery then commuting 40 miles to work and returning in time to pick him up wasn't easy, but it was perfectly possible. Since the introduction of this scheme my life has dramatically changed, after dropping my son at nursery I need to get across Cheltenham but I am now confronted by larger amounts of traffic being rerouted around the centre so at every junction and every roundabout it takes a lot longer. It takes 30 minutes just to get to the Arle Court roundabout.

This is not the worst part, the worst part is the return journey which is a complete nightmare, all routes are now blocked and what I used to be able to do in a timely manner just is not possible. I have tried the following routes frantically:

*Cirencester Road
Old Bath Road
College Road
Rodney Road
St George's Street
Gloucester Road
Princess Elizabeth Way
Fiddler's Green Lane*

Plus every other route and short cut I can think of; I am one of the people in the real world having to deal with this every day twice a day just to carry out my life. Short of moving from an area I enjoy living in which shouldn't have to happen, I am fed up of being told to ride a bike, get the train, use the buses and change my job, all of which just aren't practical with a 4 year old child and work.

Due to the closure I have had to significantly change my working pattern, so I now have to start earlier, the impact of this on my son is that his daddy can no longer

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drop him off at nursery and hasn't been able to for 18 months. It also means that his daddy has had to take on extra childcare in the mornings to make sure this is workable, the cost of this at £50 per week is significant if you do the sums over the last 18 months.

In the early days the panic it caused trying to get across Cheltenham in time before nursery closed was just unfair, to be left at the mercy of this implementation to basically find your own way was out of order.

This statement is on behalf my 4 year old son who just wants his dad to drop him off and pick him up, a dad who doesn't want to spend up to an extra hour a day in traffic, an extra hour that could be spent with his son!

Having reviewed the data only released yesterday it is very clear that the objections to this are a very significant proportion, in the sample I managed to look at within the timescales of yesterday evening over, 90% were clearly in objection. I have been applying for this data on a drip feed basis since February and have continued with the Information Commissioner's Office to pursue why this has been blocked and what has been hidden, well coincidentally that detail drops in the day before the meeting and after reviewing it, I now fully understand why it was hidden!

You have heard how this significantly impacts my 4 year old son, so I just want to finish with this thought, I propose that we lock all the doors to this building in which we are sat and let each and every one of you find a way out to get to your families, because this is exactly what I have to go through every day when trying to get across Cheltenham due to the Boots Corner closure and all routes being blocked!"

7.5.16 Peter Christensen – Local resident

"My name is Peter Christensen, I have retired as a Senior Lecturer for Hospitality and Tourism at the University of Gloucestershire and recently the role of Chairman of the Cheltenham Hospitality Association. I live on Hales Road, a road to the north east of Cheltenham, this route has increasingly become a cut through from and to the London Road, A40 and the suburbs and villages to the north of the town as well as the main A345 route.

I have seen a considerable increase in the level of traffic on Hales Road and regularly traffic will be queuing back from the London Road junction past my house, a distance of over half a mile. I had not seen this prior to the Phase 4 closure of Boots Corner. Even though this is a closure of a northbound route, it is clear that the additional congestion it is causing in the central area is forcing traffic to avoid it in the southbound direction. I believe this is also the case for All Saints Road and Hewlett Road although this is being dispelled by the traffic officers.

There has been no mitigation on Hales Road for the traffic increase or any reported monitoring. Increasingly I see cars rat-running up and down Eldon Road to Hewlett Road when the queues are backed up, creating danger to pedestrians and in particular school children, down the once quiet residential road with cars parked at either side.

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What shocks me the most is the level of deceit displayed by the authorities in attempting to claim that Boots Corner is not impacting traffic levels in this area. We are assured in section 5.39 of the report that a comprehensive data collection and analysis exercise has been undertaken to understand any effects of the CTP across the borough, yet I am on the main circuit around town and there has been no monitoring of it included.

It is a malfeasance to present the 'Borough wide Traffic Data;' and claim in section 5.37 of the report that 'The lack of any increase in traffic in the zone immediately surrounding the town centre shows that the introduction of the CTP has not had any wider effects outside of the immediate town centre', when it blatantly has. It is just that the authority appears to have chosen either not to monitor it or to ignore it!

An overwhelming majority in the town are against this damaging scheme including taxi drivers! Yet public opinion is being blatantly and intentionally suppressed, with 1500 consultation responses, crucial information, of which some 750 appear still held back against the ruling of the Information Commissioner's Office. The negative impact on the traffic network appears to be intentionally and disgracefully hidden and the Municipal Council is seeking to directly make a large capital return on the outcome of this decision.

You can either recommend the immediate re-opening of Boots Corner or refer this to public inquiry where this decision belongs and cannot be further fettered by the Cheltenham Development Task Force!"

7.5.17 Ken Pollock – Local Resident

Mr Pollock informed the Committee he had sent comprehensive material to the former head of Gloucestershire County Council Highways, over the last several years, to set out why the Phase 4 of the CTP was not the right solution for Cheltenham.

He also advised the Committee that he had recently submitted a formal complaint to GCC (Gloucestershire's Highway Authority) against its procedures and other aspects in relation to the CTP Phase 4 Boots Corner trial.

He was strongly of the view that trial had resulted in a significant adverse impact on Cheltenham's highway network. He pointed out to the Committee that both Gloucester and Cirencester had more than one key outer main road but Cheltenham only had an inner ring road, which had now been closed as part of the trial, causing major disruption.

He emphasised to the Committee that fundamentally this was a highways issue, never-mind the economic and environment issues being spun by CBC. He put it to the Committee that a major aspiration of CBC had always been to facilitate the redevelopment of its Municipal Offices by closing Royal Well Road; traffic issues had only been of minimal consideration.

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He suggested that if the Committee was not able to recommend the scheme be abandoned outright, then it should be referred to public inquiry, otherwise the Committee would be culpable of wrecking the town.

7.5.18 Derek Marley – Local resident

“I am a resident of Pittville and regularly travel south to north, through Cheltenham by car. This closure has had a considerable impact on me personally and also to local residents (particularly those living in St George’s Street), due to the main central artery being closed which forces me to use the left hand artery along St George’s Street. This change has not only significantly increased my journey time along this often-travelled route, but it has also increased the nuisance and pollution caused by my car (and others in the same situation as me), to the residents of St George’s Street, in particular.

What I find incredible is the determination of the authority to close this route, when so clearly it is bad for the network, the economy and the residents of Cheltenham. People whose concerns are being totally ignored by CBC. A council who walked out of its own full Council meeting to discuss this plan on 21 January, ignored 6,000 names on a petition and even voted at that meeting to refuse a public discussion in open forum. In addition, the suppression of over 1500 consultation responses is disgraceful, particularly when only 775 odd have been released, too late for analysis, after a long battle to hide them against Freedom of Information & Information Commissioner’s Office repeated requests. There really is no excuse for this obstructive behaviour!

The most shocking part of this whole procedure is the Traffic Regulation Committee report on Cheltenham Transport Plan, Phase 4, which is grossly misleading and attempts to convince this Committee into believing (quite wrongly) that there is no significant negative impact on traffic flow, pollution or peoples quality of life.

Three particular examples of misleading information are:

The town zonal traffic study (page 21) attempts to claim that traffic flows have not increased in the middle and outer zones. How can it, when the majority of the input and output roads to these zones have no traffic flow counters on them?

For example; from Granley Road on the A40 round to Hales Road, through Prestbury and then on to Swindon Lane and Wymans Lane, back to Princess Elizabeth Way!

The new main arteries of Rodney Road, College Road, All Saints Road and Gloucester Road are also ignored in this zonal study. Indeed, all the new rat-runs, including my preferred route along St George’s Street are completely ignored, with their huge increases in traffic and pollution not highlighted in this study. Frankly this is quite shameful in its blatant and intentional attempt to mislead you, the Committee. Contrary to what Cllr Steve Jordan said this morning, this scheme displaces faster moving traffic at Boots Corner with crawling traffic along St George’s Road and Rodney Road and increases pollution not reduces it.

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Page 17 shows a graph of traffic flows in the town, displayed in a curious order designed to (incorrectly) suggest a downward trend (left to right). Also, three streets of high increases:

*-All Saints
-Montpellier Spa Road
Winchcombe Street South*

are excluded from the graph. What is the point of a graph, which is purely designed to suggest a misleading downward trend and seeks to hide the largest increases i.e. to mislead this Committee?

'The Bluetooth Journey time data' is misleading, it suggests that journey times through the town are halved! When only areas where times are reduced have been included in this part of the assessment!

In conclusion, the arguments and data presented in support of this scheme are both misleading and flawed and if allowed, the closure of Boots Corner will be severely detrimental to the future of Cheltenham in terms of traffic flow, pollution and commercial success.

Thank you."

7.5.19 Louise Mellor – Local Resident

(Speech summarised)

Ms Mellor informed the Committee that she had seen a massive increase in traffic volume in College Road; at certain times traffic along this road and the surrounding roads, becomes completely gridlocked.

Ms Mellor expressed concern that the volume of slow moving and stationary traffic would increase air pollution in those residential roads. She was also concerned that emergency vehicles would struggle to make it through the congestion.

Ms Mellor emphasised to the Committee the need for the return of free movement of traffic through Boots Corner, to therefore put a stop to the unnecessary clogging of traffic in the surrounding roads.

7.5.20 Christine Saunders – Local resident

"I live on College Road between St Luke's Rd and Bath Parade and I can say with hand on heart that the traffic has more than doubled since the closure of Boots Corner. We have bumper to bumper, stop/go vehicles outside our house for up to 4 hours each week day afternoon, emitting noxious fumes which we can smell in our home and car radios blaring out loud music which we have to listen to in our lounge, so we are no longer able to open our windows. The report is a slanted

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pack of lies that is blatantly refusing to accept the increased damage caused by moving free flowing traffic from a transient area into a residential one.

On several occasions when stepping out of my drive I have narrowly been missed by a cyclist riding on the pavement due to the gridlock on the road.

What I am most shocked about with this TRO process is the lengths the authorities have gone to subvert the comments and views of the residents and businesses and present an acceptable impression of the scheme. There is an absolute intention to deceive and push this scheme through at any cost.

At the first TRO consultation 72% of responses objected to the scheme, at the second it had risen to 94%. In the latest consultations it is about 85 and 90% against. This data has only just been released, too late for formal analysis due to a disgraceful delay by GCC.

In response to the initial ETRO, there were over 1500 responses, this is staggering, yet almost half are not considered. The remainder are summarised into just over five pages, giving no indication of the weight of the recent 85 to 90% objection.

The 'appraisal' of these resulted in the Phase 4 amendments and look suspiciously like a wish list from CBC ignoring the real emphasis of the feedback.

This ill-conceived scheme is for the financial benefit of the authority at an unacceptable cost to the town's residents and economy.

Given that this insane scheme was only given a lifeline on economic grounds, we can now see the overwhelming opposition to it from the businesses. This scheme has to be abandoned as fast as possible to try and minimise the disastrous impact it is having on our lives and economy.

Lives are being ruined and livelihoods destroyed. Overall, there is an increase in pollution across the town and now it has created the problem in residential areas where people cannot escape and where there was never a problem before!

Protocol 1 of the Human Rights Act states 'that a person has the right to the peaceful enjoyment of all their possessions which includes not only the house but also the surroundings'. The closure of Boots Corner, and the disregard of this Council for the residents of this lovely town, has taken this enjoyment away.'

7.5.21 Jayne Lillywhite – Local resident

"Cheltenham's Managing Director for Place and Growth letter states that the traffic reduction has not impacted on the performance of the town centre. As a hotel owner in the centre of town I have to refute this most strongly. Since the closure of Boots Corner many hotels have seen a sharp decrease in returning corporate weekday trade, as existing and potential customers who work in the vicinity of Cheltenham are now reluctant to brave the increased congestion during peak hours and stay away. Cheltenham has lost its draw for this trade who are now more

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reluctant to make the additional effort. This has a knock on affect to many businesses and especially restaurants. This excellent, consistent, bread and butter trade is being turned away from the town for no good reason.

Amongst the many complaints I have received (on this scheme), one stands out, a returning guest who stays for four days during the literature festival, arrived flustered from town, I asked her what was wrong, she said it was the traffic from walking across town, and she described it as 'thick, dense, ratty, bad tempered and impatient'. She explained that she lived in Vincent Square which is in the heart of Westminster, where the drivers are not nearly as aggressive or frustrated.

I just hope it has not put her off returning next year. We have many that will not return and two in particular who broke down in tears when they realised they had been fined.

Making CBC responsible for air quality data is putting the fox in charge of the chicken house! They are currently attempting to reduce the size of the Air Quality Management Areas to ensure that residential areas are not blighted in the future, the inference being that they are anticipating an increase and if they are not required to monitor an area there is no problem with its exceedance.

The three pollution monitors that CBC have installed are after the exit of junctions where the traffic is moving, not the entry, where traffic is stop start which creates up to four times the pollution.

Pollution levels had been falling in Cheltenham by an average of 1% a year for four years until this trial started since then it has increased by 1%. Pollution levels with the transient pedestrian traffic have never been an issue at Boots Corner and monitoring was stopped in 2009. Why is this used as an argument for the scheme which now pumps even greater amounts and levels into residential areas where there is no escape for residents.

There is no doubt that the additional pollution from the increased length and stop/start nature of journeys far outways what is saved.

This closure has a detrimental impact on climate change. Environmental arguments only tell us abandon this flawed scheme."

7.5.22 Michiel Huysinga – Local resident

"My name is Mike Huysinga, I am a resident of College Road as well as a local business man. My wife and I own the Strand pub which is on the High Street as well as the Exmouth Arms and The Royal in Charlton Kings. I am against the closure of Boots Corner.

Cheltenham is no doubt suffering from the decline in the High Street which is being felt nationwide. Yes, we have seen the opening of John Lewis but the massive decline of Cavendish House. The pedestrianised sections of the High Street are a mess with tarmac substituting proper paving stones in large areas, long term shop

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closure for example: the old Sports Direct; Austen Reed; LK Bennet; Jones shoe shop, to name but a few. The Brewery redevelopment, now over 10 years old, is still not 100% occupied even with the arrival of the Alchemist chain. The Babel pub recently closed its doors.

My town is treading water and in the midst of this the Council seem determined to make it worse by closing the main artery into the centre. Cars have been left to their own devices and are now clogging up residential roads. One of the main roads is College Road. If you wish to travel northbound on College Road between 3pm and 6pm Mon-Thurs then you are in for a long wait. It's even worse on a Friday. Traffic queues all the way from the London Road lights to the Sanford Road junction. The traffic down the Old Bath Road to the London Road past Cox's Meadow is the same.

The air pollution, according to Council figures, on College Road has worsened since the trial started from an average of 26.26 units per cubic metre from August 2018 to December 2018, to 28.19 units per cubic metre January 2019 to May 2019 and in October of this year it was up to 29.76. Unfortunately, the Council omitted to record air pollution levels prior to August 2018. This seems a bit strange as College Road was always going to be a major alternative route. So additional traffic has been forced to use College Road which is a popular central residential area.

If Boots Corner was to be closed permanently then this would discourage people to live in the centre of town. The same problem will exist on other roads around the town centre, Pittville for example. Residents parking on College Road is becoming more and more difficult as people seek ways not to drive into the town centre. It has not been helped by parking permits being liberally handed out to non-residents. There have been many an occasion where I have witnessed stationary ambulances with their blue lights on unable to get through the traffic jam. Not being a doctor but I presume the quicker an ambulance gets to an emergency the better for the patient.

As I said at the beginning of my statement, we own three pubs in Cheltenham. We have owned them for over 10 years so we must be doing something right. We obviously serve a lot of local customers. I can say, hand on heart, that I have never heard anyone praising the fact that Boots Corner is closed. What I have heard is that our customers avoid the town centre like the plague. And, no, this does not mean they use alternative transport it means they don't go in, period. There are plenty of alternatives whether it's the internet or a drive to Gloucester. I appreciate the Council are taking the long term view but, again, prior to the closure I never heard anyone complain about getting into the town centre and then suggesting that closing Boots corner would be a great idea.

The 'Boots Corner' issue has raised peoples' anger. We recently held the BBC Five Live breakfast show at the Exmouth Arms. They sent a reporter out a few days prior to the show. This reporter lived in Worcester and therefore knew nothing about the local goings on in the town. He spent the morning in The Brewery development to interview people about the coming election. As you know Cheltenham was a marginal seat hence the interest shown by a national BBC radio

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station. We met him afterwards and he asked us about Boots Corner. The reporter bought up the subject of Boots Corner, not us. All the people he had spoken to seemed to be more concerned about the Boots Corner closure than the overall national picture. People were obviously happy about the A&E remaining open but Boots Corner was right up there as well.

I firmly believe that one of the reasons Alex Chalk, Conservative, retained his seat is due to voters being demoralised by our local Lib Dem politicians. Remember the Lib Dems have a 17 seat majority on the Borough Council, Max Wilkinson is a long standing councillor, Cheltenham is a remain town. Surely if the voters were happy with their local Lib Dems this should have been reflected well on Max Wilkinson. Alex Chalk is a staunch opponent of the Boots Corner Closure. Max Wilkinson has slavishly voted for closure time and time again. Alex Chalk is still our MP.

Boots Corner is a vital artery for this town. Simply closing it with inadequate planning and a few cosmetic road changes is folly. As has been said many times, it's a solution for a problem that does and did not exist. Local businesses are suffering massively from customer annoyance at not being able to easily access the centre, local residents are breathing in more pollution. Other roads through the pedestrianised zone oddly remain open, like Rodney road. There was talk in January that there would be traffic calming measures as more cars were now using Rodney road. This has not happened. The ultimate irony is that you still have to wait and be more vigilant to cross the road at Boots Corner because the cars that have access can now drive much quicker, as do the buses.

Our local Council have dug themselves a hole which they refuse to acknowledge. A 6000 signature petition has been handed in, 1500 further negative responses seem to have been ignored. This Council needs to wake up and realise our town is against them."

7.5.23 Jane Wilson – Local resident

"I remain incredulous that, in spite of all the public opposition to the closure of Boots Corner and the consequent, foreseeable extra traffic and pollution on all surrounding streets and residential roads now used to avoid the town centre, Cheltenham Borough Council persists in this lunacy and refuses to re-open Boots Corner to anything other than buses or taxis.

I cannot understand why CBC ignored a 6000+ petition, or the fact there are several pages on social media: Cheltenham Residents against Boots Corner; Cheltenham Business and Residents Action Group; Anti Cheltenham Borough Council; which all have one aim - to re-open Boots Corner.

Bus gate/Boots Corner should never have been allowed to trial without an adequate through road for Cheltenham already being in operation. The thoughtlessness and failure to plan behind this whole scheme has been staggering.

Some reasons are:

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The area has not been pedestrianised. Pedestrians must still use the crossing lights at Boots Corner to cross the road.

Businesses are suffering from loss of income and customers.

Delivery lorries can no longer easily deliver to the businesses in the area.

Residents are stuck in traffic jams to drive anywhere in Cheltenham.

People are completely avoiding the town centre and driving to retail parks or ordering online, or driving to other towns with cheaper parking.

CBC didn't consider the elderly, those with disabilities, those unable to ride bicycles, those unable to afford public transport or taxis.

But the main reason people are passionately against this project is because traffic must now 'detour' through residential areas, increasing the pollution in those areas and consequently affecting those residents' quality of life.

On social media, this is described as Cheltenham Borough Council's vanity project. With this project, CBC ignores everyone who has to work, live or travel in this area. I am not saying that the theory was not a good one: reduce pollution; encourage more sustainable modes of transport; encourage cycling and walking; but in practice this trial has done none of these things. It is a failure.

So my question to the Gloucestershire County Council is this; we have local council elections in May, if GCC fails to hear those in this meeting and votes to make this closure permanent, how much is it going to cost CBC/GCC/local taxpayers again, to re-open Boots Corner once the local Lib Dem councillors/those who voted to make this permanent, are removed from office and lose their majority?

People are galvanised and motivated against these councillors now. We wish the general elections last week had been local, so that they could have been removed from office then. Residents are committed to removing all those who see Boots Corner as a good idea and as you may have seen from formal representations, objectors outnumber supporters 9 to 1.

Residents will support councillors and prospective councillors whose main aim is to reopen Boots Corner.

Please don't underestimate the underlying anger and refusal of residents to accept this complete and utter farce being forced upon us by a tribal band of councillors who have damaged this town, its constituents and its environs."

7.5.24 Janice Brazier – Local resident

"My name is Janice Brazier and I run Beauty by Janice from Chameleons Hair Salon. Like other town centre shops, my business relies heavily on footfall to gain new clients. Since the closure, the number of pedestrians walking past has

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dropped dramatically and new client enquiries have gone from 1 or 2 a day, before the closure to 1 or 2 a month after the closure. Regular clients are coming in less often or finding salons with easier access.

As traffic can no longer go through the town centre, the surrounding roads are busier and a lot of my clients are getting stuck in the traffic, arriving late and stressed. Clients living in areas outside of Cheltenham, who used to be regulars now only come in occasionally or have stopped coming to Cheltenham at all. I have seen a 10% drop in takings since the closure.

I also have concerns about the extra traffic, which is now being pushed into surrounding roads like St Pauls, Fairview and St Luke's. My 6 year old granddaughter has a rare Auto Immune Condition and has to take immune suppressant drugs which lower her immune system. She lived in St Paul's and has to walk along a very busy St Paul's Road to school in Fairview daily and regularly has to walk to her appointments at the hospital. These roads are so busy now, they are almost impossible to cross. They are now known pollution hotspots and my granddaughter is breathing in pollution all day everyday. She has developed asthma issues in the last year and has had to move out of St Paul's to a less congested area and her breathing has now improved. Pushing pollution to areas where children live and go to school to keep it away from the town centre should not be acceptable."

7.5.25 Dr Liz Rolls – Local resident

"The experimental TRO regarding Cheltenham Transport Plan Phase 4 has resulted in the prohibition of driving through Boots Corner. I am objecting for two reasons.

1: The unacceptable increase of Nitrous Oxide (NO₂) in residential areas

According to both the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Chief Medical Officer, pollution in the form exposure to concentrations of NO₂ impacts negatively on health - especially on the respiratory and cardiovascular systems - shortening lives.

The impact of pollution depends on how much is emitted, how harmful it is but, most significantly, on where it is emitted and how vulnerable the exposed population is as a result of the build up of local concentrations of pollutants (Washam, 2011).

Furthermore, outdoor air pollutants can easily migrate indoors, and most exposure to ambient air pollution occurs inside buildings. Recent research indicates that people living near congested highways face a greater risk of such diseases and recommends moving to a less-polluted neighbourhood to lower their risk (Washam, 2011).

The decision of Cheltenham Borough Council to initiate the closure of Boots Corner has resulted in originally less-polluted residential areas in the town centre becoming

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more polluted. The removal of transitory traffic proceeding through transitory populations of shoppers around Boots Corner to the smaller residential roads has resulted in long periods of stationary traffic amongst the stationary populations inhabiting these areas. This constitutes a dereliction of duty.

2: The unacceptable increase in congestion and dangerous driving in smaller residential roads

Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucestershire County Council through their Transport Plan are trying to initiate a modal shift in transport to reduce CO₂/NO₂ emissions – a worthy cause indeed. But the modal shift has not been supported. Poor levels of rural public transport makes car use a necessity, and cycling in Cheltenham is a dangerous sport because of aggressive driving made worse by the pot holes and confusion arising from the absence of direction signage.

With the closure of Boots Corner, and significantly in the absence of this signage, traffic has had to find its own way across town. Indeed, Gloucestershire County Council's responses to the formal representation comments asked drivers whether they are aware of all the routes available to get across town (as if it is their responsibility!) And have they tried them all? I quote 'it may be worth speaking to others to discuss route options, using route planning options on Google maps and exploring alternative routes through the town'. Well, people have – and one route is College Road (an area that Philip Williams has not mentioned today) which has become unacceptably congested especially from 4.00pm onwards. In turn, like other residential areas, St Luke's Road has been turned into a short-cut in an attempt to avoid the already congested College Road.

In a further attempt to bypass this congestion, drivers are using St Luke's Place as a further rat-run, so this whole area has not only experienced an increase in NO₂ and other pollution from stationary traffic, but a host of angry and speeding drivers cutting each other up to avoid the queues, and driving at dangerous speeds along a very narrow lane where front doors open onto the street, where there are approximately 40cms of road available each side of an average car – slightly more than the width of this paper!

Gloucestershire County Council's report states that there has been a gradual reduction in cars on surrounding routes. Not so in this area.

In conclusion, Cheltenham Borough Council's stated policy to improve the quality of life in the town has not been supported by the closure of Boots Corner. The mad traffic system now in place as a result of the closure is keeping people away from visiting and shopping here, and the quality of life for town residents has been significantly reduced at the same time as increasing the pollution hazard to health."

7.5.26 Peter Sayers – Local resident

"Welcome all. This should have been a good scheme. I am in favour, usually, of removing traffic from the centres of towns.

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This trial scheme, however, has failed – failed visitors, failed businesses and failed residents. But why? Why has it failed?

It has failed solely through its exceedingly poor implementation. By resorting to 'old style' planning of 'traffic will find its way' the instigators of this scheme have abrogated their responsibility. The scheme fails to recognise that travellers need clearly signposted routes around our town centre; fails in that it encourages traffic and pollution into residential streets that are not designed for such an onslaught; it fails visitors and tourists who are confused and or fined; it fails businesses who thereby lose trade.

The trial should be halted and Boots Corner reopened. But, I say to the Council planners and the Committee, come back with a responsible and imaginative plan. This scheme is not it.

I want to make a second statement, as a representative of an area particularly affected by these traffic plans. The area is St Paul's Road and into Clarence Square.

The Council monitor on the entrance to Clarence Square shows traffic flows of over a quarter of a million vehicles per month (282,294 for October, the last month that figures are available). This volume is a considerable increase since the traffic plan trials and not acceptable where people live and work and children play.

Mitigation has been proposed that is carelessly conceived and lacks consultation and advice from those chiefly affected. There are a number of interesting and innovative solutions but at present there is not a means to offer these to planners.

So again, I reiterate, make the decision stop this particular failed trial and re-present it with a proper implementation strategy."

7.5.27 Jim Ranger – Local resident

"Whilst the experimental transport scheme may have appeared to have met the initial limited objectives, it has been at the cost of extreme traffic disruption to the rest of Cheltenham. For example, both College Road and the Bath Road are frequently over-crowded with vehicles what at rush hour time becomes stop start. Even roads such as St Luke's Road and St Luke's Place have considerable increased vehicle use. In the case of St Luke's Place, a very narrow one-way street, this is particularly dangerous to children and or dogs, as a number of the houses' front doors open directly onto the street. The traffic levels can be confirmed by the road traffic calculators periodically placed across the road.

I am told that even commuters working in the east of the town and going north find their journeys taking much longer due to the convoluted route they now have to take. Traffic signs are of no help as for example, Bath Road has a sign on the road indicating the inner ring which never gets repeated elsewhere.

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Whilst the noxious fumes no longer affect the transient pedestrians at Boots Corner, they have merely been transferred to residential areas where there is a permanent population.

Visitors/strangers to the town become totally confused and therefore tend to shop in towns elsewhere such as Cirencester, which is deleterious to the economy of Cheltenham.

For these reasons I am opposing the experimental traffic scheme.”

7.5.28 Meg Ranger – Local resident

“As a direct result of the implementing of this trial there has been an unacceptable increase in traffic using the roads in and around the St Luke’s area especially Bath Road, St Luke’s Road and College Road, St Luke’s Road being the link between the other two. At rush hour particularly in the afternoons when it starts around 4.00 pm, the traffic is at a standstill, barely crawling forwards. This situation extends to Sandford Road, Old Bath Road and Thirlstaine Road, the whole area is gridlocked.

St Luke’s Place where I live is of particular concern, this a 1 vehicle width lane with several residents’ front doors opening directly onto the road. It has become a rat-run for angry frustrated drivers who speed down the road one immediately after the other, endangering the lives of residents particularly those with children and pets, or who are unsteady on their feet.

The volume of slow moving and stationary traffic increases air pollution, this is a residential area, the same people live there year in year out, unlike the transient population passing through Boots Corner.

Cyclists in Oriel Road are in danger from confused motorists who, due to poor/absent road signs over a very short distance, are force to suddenly change lanes.

Cheltenham Borough Council has a duty to the residents and business people of the town regarding health and economic well-being. These are being seriously compromised by this ill thought out scheme which should be scrapped before more damage is done.”

7.5.29 Bernard Rowe – Local resident

“I am a registered engineer and have been for over the past 41 years, my employment has had me looking at planning, building regulations, renewable energy, air pollution, carbon reduction to name a few.

We all agree any queue of stationary motor vehicles generates pollution and if there is a queue of traffic where there was none before then this is congestion, St Paul’s Residents Association have argued that the closure of Boots Corner has generated more pollution in their area.

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There are various research papers on the internet looking into high side buildings and traffic queues, the results of the research states that heat from car engines causes pollutants to rise and the prevailing weather systems and high sided buildings cause a wind tunnel effect, it draws the pollutants to rise higher. St George's street aligns to our south westerly weather system, the air monitoring equipment is in the wrong place they were not put in to monitor St George's street.

The Council have not published the 2019 Nitrogen Oxide levels to enable us to compare it with 2018 and see where the 12,500 trips that used Boots Corner have moved onto.

I have noted the queues of traffic up St George's Street, Winchcombe Street, The Promenade, the effects of Boots corner just pushes more traffic onto these roads.

The worst effects are yet to come, once all satellite navigation systems get updated then these streets will only get worse as motorists will be actively guided to use these streets to name a few.

I look at my journeys into town to shop and divergence from my normal route, instead of having 5 stop/starts I now do 15 additional, or an alternative route through St Paul's 12 additional stop/starts. My journeys now produce three times more pollution, multiply this by 12,500 trips that used Boots Corner, these trips don't go away.

Roads have been opened up to divert traffic away from Boots Corner, any diversion is usually longer than the normal route, these are not amendments to the scheme but road diversions.

We are told the closure is not for pollution reasons, we are told that it is for the vitality of the high street, more shops have closed since Boots Corner closure.

This scheme is not working, all it has achieved is more congestion not being able to simply go south-north leading too more pollution, extended journey times, in a time of climate emergency.

The Council have declared a climate emergency in 2019 we can plainly see Boots Corner closure is just tripling pollution to the town. If the Council really believe in stopping climate change, Boots Corner closure should be scrapped."

7.5.30 Pamela Jenkins – Local resident

(Speech summarised)

Ms Jenkins, in addressing the Committee, detailed how much the volume of traffic had increased in Rodney Road and the surrounding roads, due to traffic displacement as a result of the Boots Corner closure.

Ms Jenkins referred to the human impact of the closure; she was deeply concerned about air and noise pollution in the surrounding residential roads resulting from the

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traffic congestion. She commented that even a small increase was detrimental to the health and well-being of residents.

Ms Jenkins was of the view that those who were in favour of the scheme probably did not live in the areas affected by it.

She hoped that the Committee would hear the concerns being raised by local residents and businesses today as she felt that they had previously been ignored.

7.5.31 Adam Lillywhite – Local resident

“This document is dishonest in its attempt to hide the schemes negative impacts whilst accentuating the benefit of developments that are not dependant on it. Look carefully, very little would be lost by reopening this road yet a great deal would be gained, with the viability of many businesses returning.

Visitors with money are the towns lifeblood, believe me, I am a hotelier, and chairman of the Hospitality Association. There has been a significant drop in the midweek corporate hotel trade, as contractors no longer stay in town.

Should we continue to repel such trade our viability and investibility will diminish, undermining any plans for the Municipal Offices.

To claim this experiment hasn't impacted the town centre is farcical. The consultation provides overwhelming empirical evidence of how the businesses and economy of the town have suffered. County Council data identifies how the sphere of the towns influence is receding as visitors head to other towns. This is not Brexit, or online, as these shoppers are now going to other centres.

Shops have started to follow them, look at David Christopher Jewellers moving out of the Regent Arcade to Southgate Street.

If things are improving why is it necessary for CBC to rely on footfall comparisons taken during festival times when the base level was not?

This experiment has refused your recommendations to trial timed closure and a single lane so improving things for both buses and pedestrians. When making amendments it has refused to address the issues it has created in Rodney Road and St Margaret's Road. It refuses to help understand final traffic flows by implementing a signage solution and making promises for the future. It has squandered this expensive opportunity that CBC begged you for. And Groundhog day, it again is trying to rely on dubious promises and steam rolling businesses and 90% of public opinion.

As councillors, if your towns benefit from this transfer of trade from Cheltenham, such as Gloucester with a 9.3% increase in traffic and now one of the best performing high streets in the UK, should you really be put in the uncomfortable position of making this decision?

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This belongs at public inquiry, where the overwhelming public opinion is not redacted, but considered and scrutinised in a timely manner, and an impartial report produced that gives proportionate weight to the negative impact, and only claims the benefit that it achieves, the bias of Cheltenham Development Task Force being removed.

You either have to abandon this failed experiment or seek a public inquiry.”

7.5.32 David Collins – Local resident

“I recently organised a business meeting in Montpellier and delegates arrived from all over the country. Many were bringing heavy samples so trains were not an option. The meeting continued in Pittville. The required journey was from the Queens Hotel to the Racecourse. What route were these visitors expected to take? Past John Lewis amongst the pedestrians, or over the bumps at St Luke’s Church?

I didn’t want the first topic of conversation to be ‘What kind of town have you brought us too?’ So, I decided my best option was to get in the lead car and direct the cavalcade through the back streets of the town. By not stating official new routes through the town has hoodwinked affected residents and businesses into a state of complacency about the future. So, my first point. A formal statement must be made on where traffic will officially be re-routed.

I live in Pittville and have 2 children at school on the other side of town. I have to make at least 2 trips, there and back, a day. They are too young to walk or cycle and no viable bus routes exist. So I drive. I have experienced the rise in traffic around the hospital where gridlock often occurs. The road through Sandford Park is narrow with parking on both sides. Ambulances simply cannot get through. So, my second point. The gridlock situation around the hospital has to be addressed.

Behavioural studies show that drivers in long queues mentally switch off, creating ‘stop start’ traffic jams and this actually reduces car throughput figures. So, my third point. The traffic reports, as created, are misleading (because of stationary traffic) and should be reinterpreted. So, do I sit in this stationary traffic. Do I heck. I use every back street, u-turn, rat-run available at every possible opportunity. And most importantly I am not going past any of the traffic monitoring points and so I have become invisible. According to the reports I am no longer on the road at all! So, my 4th point. The increasing number of cars, vans and lorries, that have been pushed on the rat-runs, are not being measured by the traffic reports at all.

And finally, Boots Corner. Taxis and delivery vehicles continue to speed through. The report states that taxis ‘provide an important option to access the town’ but they clearly don’t need to drive through Boots Corner to access the town.

Boots Corner should be celebrating Cheltenham as a famous Spa town with a world class water feature and public square. It’s never going to achieve this with buses, taxis and lorries thundering through.

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Of course, a relatively cheap ‘cut and cover’ tunnel would demonstrate that Cheltenham has the forward thinking to make a better future for everyone. So, to conclude, this partial closure achieves little and is insufficient. If Boots Corner is to be closed it should be closed to all traffic and a proper, class leading, transport strategy should be announced and implemented. Thank you.”

7.5.33 Andrew Riley – Local resident

“I have lived on All Saints Road for the last 15 years. Before this trial started, I do not remember seeing an accident, yet in a four month period around November 2018 I have witnessed 4 accidents, I am told there have been more. The most shocking one happened close to my home, I had to rescue the elderly driver from his car and direct traffic until the police arrived.

What I find shocking is that even this serious accident is not shown on your maps, Appendix I, neither are the other 3, one of which involved 4 cars.

There has been a dramatic increase in collisions in All Saints Road yet this is not reported to you. The Committee document states that there has been a ‘similar or reduced number of collisions’, section 6.2, when even according to the maps in front of you, which are clearly under-reporting, the frequency has increased from 1.68 a month to 2. This is clearly misrepresenting the actuality to you.

I have checked the crashmaps going back 20 years. There are five junctions which have by far the worst accident records in the town, Prestbury Road Roundabout; Fairview Road and Winchcombe Street; Fairview Road and Portland Street; Fairview Road and North Place; St George’s Street and St Margaret’s Road; all now receive more traffic with more complex manoeuvres. Why are CBC so obsessed with this scheme that they are prepared to risk people’s lives for it?

It has also been brought to my attention that staff from M&S have had to use their first aid training on 4 occasions for people hurt in accidents outside their Click and Collect entrance. This number could have been higher but click and collect orders are down 30% year on year.”

Supporting:

7.5.34 Clare Savage - Formal Investments

(Speech summarised)

Ms Savage described how a lack of parking for employees of town centre businesses meant that more people were working from home or walking and cycling to work. It was important that measures were taken to enable safer cycling and to introduce more cycle ways.

She expressed support for the scheme as it was the right option for the vitality of the town.

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7.5.35 Rupert Cox – Stagecoach

“From the outset (back in 2013) when Gloucestershire County Council were seeking funding from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, Stagecoach has been fully committed and supportive of the Cheltenham Transport Plan. This remains the case, and indeed, the positive impact it is having on bus customers is massive.

Prior to the implementation of the Cheltenham Transport Plan, we commissioned an independent study into how and why people accessed the town. This showed that more people came into the town by bus than car. Along with our own statistics on usage, this gave us the confidence to start a new round of improvements and investments in buses for Cheltenham.

As a company, we can deliver many things on our own; we need help with the infrastructure that makes buses run on time and consistently to a timetable. Of the reasons why a bus journey doesn't operate, 75% of the cause is congestion. The Cheltenham Transport Plan contained a number of features that would help us deliver a more attractive bus service.

Phase 1 – Albion Street bus lane

Service B directly benefited from this new bus lane introduced at the start of the Cheltenham Transport Plan. At the time it was used by 7,000 passengers a week. The bus lane, and shorter route into Pittville Street saved 1,500 miles per annum (about 190 gallons of diesel) and about 2 minutes shorter running time (plus a more consistent journey time). Since then, we have routed other bus services along this bus lane and improved the frequency of service B to Charlton Kings. We're now seeing more 8,000 passenger journeys a week.

Phase 4 – Boots Corner

Since June 2018 we have seen (like for like) passenger journey numbers in Cheltenham increase by 6,000 a week; that's more than 4% growth against a national picture of decline. That growth is continuing.

Based on average car occupancy rates, that's about 3,000 to 4,000 fewer private vehicles.

Bus punctuality has improved too – up from 91.5% on time performance to 93.1%. We run more than 50,000 miles a week so even a 1% improvement makes a significant impact.

Why is it vital for the Cheltenham Transport Plan to become permanent?

The Boots Corner closure has improved punctuality and increased the number of people using buses. This creates a virtuous circle for buses in the town that has given us the confidence to make further improvements and investment. That will keep growth coming for years ahead but all the phases of the Cheltenham Transport Plan are required to enable this.

We are, or have recently invested in:

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7 days a week Arle Court P&R services with brand new buses launched in May 2018; new commercial service provision between Cheltenham and Winchcombe (service W) and evening / Sunday journeys between Cheltenham and Tewkesbury (service 41).

Route frequency improvements to services B (50% more buses), N (30 minutes up from 40 minutes) and 97/98 (30 minutes to 20 minutes).

New faster services between Cheltenham & Gloucester (94X introduced in September 2019).

*14 new single deckers for services A and C (investment worth £2.2million)
Expanded parking area at Cheltenham bus depot to increase capacity by 25 buses.”*

7.5.36 Michael Ratcliffe, Cheltenham Chamber of Commerce

“I am Michael Ratcliffe, long term resident of Cheltenham, chief executive of both Ratcliffe Insurance and the Cheltenham Chamber of Commerce.

The Chamber is a not-for-profit business organisation that exists purely for the good of the region. It has been promoting small business success and supporting the big business economy in Gloucestershire since 1904.

Through close collaboration with local and national business leaders, we address critical issues with the aim to promote business and economic growth within Cheltenham. It is our goal to promote, protect and represent the interests of local businesses of all sizes and to effect local community prosperity via a pro-business climate. In so doing, we also aim to make the region a better place to live and work.

The Chamber has a long history of lobbying and championing causes that affect Cheltenham and the wider county and has actively lobbied for a host of interventions as varied as a J10 upgrade; a Local Enterprise Partnership sponsored growth hub for Cheltenham; Accident & Emergency provision; the A417 ‘missing link’ and the Boots Corner trial.

The Chamber has been supportive of the Cheltenham Transport Plan since its inception as a means to break the stranglehold that the ring road held on Cheltenham, and promote longer term sustainable transport measures.

Whilst the closure of Boots Corner initially polarised professional and personal opinions in Cheltenham, the emerging climate change crisis has brought into stark relief the need for all citizens to take their part by adjusting behaviours. The fact that the trial has created an environment for significant modal shift with more people walking, cycling and using public transport is to be applauded.

We note from GCC data that this aligns with a reduction in car usage. The fear would be that the trial has strangled the town and caused a loss of trade, and

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driven away investors. Whilst some retailers have experienced challenges the extent to which this can be solely attributed to the traffic trial is a moot point given the rapid pace of change on the High Street.

However, we would point to the on-going investment in the town. Investment that is in full knowledge that the two local authorities are working together to reduce private vehicle movements. Major recent investment examples include Honeybourne Place (the first new build office for nearly two decades), the refurbishment of the Quadrangle for commercial use, the extension of the successful 131 boutique hotel, the refurbishment of The George Hotel, the arrival of John Lewis & Partners, and the redevelopment of 111-117 High Street.

And whilst investment is a great barometer of confidence, it is seeing the output that is even more important. The arrival of SLG and Hub8 in the space created at The Brewery, with significant job numbers helps cement that vibrancy so important for the economy of the town.

So, whilst the trial has not been without its challenges the Chamber believe that it is on the correct trajectory if we are to respond to climate change. However, we also believe that the Cheltenham Transport Plan can be further improved with further interventions on the A4019 Poole Way to Fairview Road stretch.

We understand that GCC plan a major traffic light synchronisation investment programme in the New Year and the Chamber fully supports this investment to address both the stacking traffic and on-going pollution risk, highlighted in the CBC air quality monitoring report.

The Chamber trusts that the Traffic Regulation Committee will recommend the trial be made permanent as stepping stone to greater sustainability.”

7.5.37 John Mallows – Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Cycling Campaign

(Speech summarised)

Mr Mallows explained that he had been involved with sustainable transport issues for many years. He referred to the alleged adverse effects of the Boots Corner trial and indicated that his own experience was that it was no more difficult to travel around the town now, than it had been before the trial commenced. He emphasised that the experience of cyclists travelling through the town had significantly improved since the trial began due to a much calmer ambience in the town centre.

He suggested that the challenges being faced by the retail sector, were subject to many factors, and that town centre vitality was generally improved when most of its traffic was curtailed.

He indicated that it would not be the right solution to re-open Boots Corner, instead, more measures should be taken to encourage people to use private vehicles less.

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7.5.38 Stuart Davis – Bamboo Technology Group

(Speech summarised)

Mr Davis informed the Committee that he was the Executive Chairman of the Bamboo Technology Group, located in the High Street and in close proximity to Boots Corner.

He described how working patterns were changing and improved transport systems were enabling people to work at locations other than in the office.

Growth in the public transport system was a positive impact as an increasing number of young people did not view car travel as the way forward.

He urged the Committee to recommend that the scheme be made permanent for the benefit of the town.

7.5.39 Nicola Inchbald – Cheltine Ltd

(Speech summarised)

Ms Inchbald informed the Committee that Cheltine Ltd was a property and investment company based in Cheltenham. Its lifeblood was retaining tenants and businesses in the town centre. On balance, the company wished to support the closure of Boots Corner being made permanent. It was important that the vitality of the town centre was retained.

Ms Inchbald indicated that retaining retail businesses could prove challenging, however, the monthly figures in this respect were on the increase. Another positive impact of the trial was the growth in bus services in Cheltenham.

She informed the Committee that speaking as a major landlord in Cheltenham, the company had experienced no reduction in the numbers of tenants as a direct result of the Boots Corner trial.

She recognised that the closure had not been without its challenges but urged the Committee to take the opportunity to reduce harmful vehicle emissions in the town centre and therefore recommend that the scheme be made permanent.

7.5.40 Tom Beasley – Active Gloucestershire

“My name is Tom Beasley. I am Director of Business Development and Deputy CEO of Active Gloucestershire. I also have a role at Sport England as part of their Extended Workforce pilot.

Active Gloucestershire are a county wide charity funded by Sport England, District, County Councils and Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning team amongst others.

Our interest in the changes made at Boots Corner relate to physical activity and the impact that low physical activity rates have on health. ‘If exercise were a pill, it

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would be one of the most cost-effective drugs ever invented' Dr Nick Cavill, Health consultant – WHO – UoG.

However, for over 40 years we have been designing physical activity out of our daily lives. As a result, physical activity levels in the county have continued to drop and we are only now starting to see an indication of change.

We know that just encouraging people to walk, cycle or even play sport has limited impact on physical activity rates. Instead we need system change. We need to re-address the balance with other modes of transport, make it the easiest choice to walk, cycle or take public transport.

Cheltenham is not alone on this journey, and I accept that it is challenging. Other towns and cities are taking these difficult decisions based on the positive impact on air quality, climate change and physical activity rates, these include: Oxford; Bristol and London.

Taking brave decisions is never easy, but the evidence is strong and speaks for itself. Increased physical activity rates are proven to: (as reported by the NHS).

*Up to a 35% lower risk of heart disease and stroke;
Up to a 50% lower risk of colon cancer;
Up to a 50% lower risk of type 2 diabetes;
Up to a 20% lower risk of breast cancer;
A 30% lower risk of early death;
Up to an 83% lower risk of osteoarthritis;
Up to a 68% lower risk of hip fracture;
A 30% lower risk of falls (amongst older adults);
Up to a 30% lower risk of depression;
Up to a 30% lower risk of dementia.*

The transport statistics at Boots Corner since the closure make a compelling case for support because of the proven cases of increased physical activity. Since the project started there has been a: 124% increase in pedestrians; 185% increase in the number of cyclists; 104% increase in parked bicycles.

Since the trial started, the measures taken to make sure that disabled people aren't excluded from the area are also supported by the 125% increase in wheelchair/mobility scooter use.

Yet nationally more than a third of the population take less than the recommended levels of physical activity. Unsurprisingly it is the most vulnerable in our society who have the lowest physical activity rates.

Favouring walking and cycling over cars isn't an easy decision to make. But against a background of poor air quality, climate change and low physical activity rates it is one that we should take seriously, and we should consider the evidence when making decisions."

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7.5.41 Chris Hickey – Local resident

“My name is Chris Hickey I’m a resident of Cheltenham and live near the Boys college and am a company director. My business is in the centre of town, behind Richer Sounds.

It’s quite clear that we’re living in an in a climate emergency. I’m 65 years old, and I’m part of the generation that may in years to come be accused of ‘fiddling while the planet burned’. I’m personally delighted to see the positive impact of the Boots Corner scheme.

It is very rare in these days that a town or a district or urban centre can manage to achieve: an increase footfall; an increase pedestrian footfall; an increase in cycling an increase bus use, all of which are having a very positive impact.

I’ve lived in Cheltenham for 25 years, and traffic is no more difficult now than it was years ago. The evidence for this is really quite clear, and if an organisation like Stagecoach, one of the hardest headed commercial organisations in the world is telling me that bus times and bus travel are up and bus use is up. This is quite clear compelling evidence from an organisation, who have no reason to manipulate the figures.

Despite the scepticism that a number of other people have expressed in the statistics and the evidence collected by the Council in their document. I am convinced by the evidence that the council has produced.

I don’t claim that my personal experience represents or constitutes evidence. It is more at the level of anecdote. However, I do run a business network and we have 1,500 members. We run 40 events a year across the county of Gloucestershire.

We regularly survey our members as to their preferred choice of venue. We ask where should we use, and because we want to be sure that we try and reduce travel and make it accessible to people.

The two favourite venues are Cheltenham and Gloucester for obvious demographic and geographical reasons. There is no evidence at all from our members, following a survey that we did as recently as four months ago, that there is any disinclination to come to Cheltenham for the events that we run. We run them at all times the day breakfast meetings, early afternoon meetings and evening meetings. Our members are not saying to us that the traffic problems of Cheltenham, have increased at all or are a disincentive to have events here.”

(At this juncture – 2:05 pm, the meeting was adjourned for a comfort break. The meeting reconvened at 2:25 pm.)

7.6 Questions from members of the Committee, of officers, on the points raised during the public representations

7.6.1 In response to a question, the Committee was informed that that provisional air quality data for 2019 was now available on the CBC website. However, this data

could not be assessed until the data for December had been received. A full report on air quality in 2019 would be published on the CBC website in February 2020. A member asked how the 6,000 signature petition objecting to the scheme had been dealt with by CBC. In response, members were informed that the petition had been considered fully by CBC within its own petition rules at a full Council meeting in January 2019.

- 7.6.2 A member referred to the reduction in the recorded levels of traffic, in the town centre, being held up as a positive impact resulting from the closure of Boots Corner. They suggested however, that this could simply indicate overall that there were less people visiting the town centre.
- 7.6.3 A question was raised as to whether the results of the traffic survey were flawed, as the anecdotal evidence appeared to suggest that traffic volume had significantly increased, on the roads being used by motorists as alternative routes. The Lead Commissioner informed members that a comprehensive data collection and analysis exercise had been undertaken to understand the effects on traffic volume/journey time, resulting from the closure of Boots Corner. Particular consideration had been given to capturing traffic information on the roads being used as alternative routes. He recognised, however, that it was possible not all routes had been identified. He added that Bluetooth technology had been used to record journey time on the route network via suitably equipped cars/smart phones. However, as Bluetooth technology was only available in more modern vehicles, this resulted in a sample rate of around 5%. This had shown an overall reduction in journey times since the start of the trial restriction which also suggested an overall reduction in traffic volumes.
- 7.6.4 In response to a question, members were informed that the DfT had amended its guidance on shared space schemes which featured a level surface; consequently, there were no plans to introduce this type of scheme at Boots Corner.
- 7.6.5 A member pointed out that whilst there may have been an improvement to the air quality at Boots Corner, the traffic being displaced into residential areas, could be increasing pollution in those areas and consequently affecting those residents' quality of life. It was felt that the negative impact on those residents would be significantly more so than when compared to the effect on the transitory population of pedestrians passing through Boots Corner.
- 7.6.6 In response to questions from members on what action could be taken to address air quality issues in those roads, the Committee was informed that the focus would be on encouraging more people to cycle, walk and use public transport. Air quality data had shown that pollution levels had not increased, nor decreased, since the commencement of the trial. CBC was required to undertake intervention measures in an aim to reduce levels of Nitrogen Dioxide in areas where levels exceeded 40µg/m. Levels around those residential roads were likely to be significantly less than 30µg/m. It was confirmed that there had been no breaches over this level on the route traffic would most likely be officially re-routed to if the ETROs were made permanent.

- 7.6.7 In response to a question, it was confirmed that there were no plans to ban diesel vehicles from Cheltenham town centre. To do so would be unprecedented for a small town like Cheltenham. There were other measures which were required by statute, to be undertaken first, to improve air quality, such as encouraging more sustainable forms of transport.
- 7.6.8 In response to a question on the procedure for convening a public inquiry, the Lawyer explained that whilst there was no legal obligation to do so, local authorities did have the option to convene a public inquiry to consider the representations made in respect of traffic regulation orders. However, the Secretary of State did not have the power to extend the maximum period of 18 months for ETROs outside of Greater London. Given that the Phase 4 ETROs would expire on 28 December 2019 and a decision on whether the ETROs should be made permanent, or abandoned, had to be made before that date, convening a public inquiry was not an option in this case.

7.7 Committee Debate and recommendation

- 7.7.1 A member commented that the local residents and business owners, negatively affected by the closure of Boots Corner, had made it very clear to the Committee just how much the closure had adversely affected their daily lives. They referred to the emphasis of the scheme being on encouraging more people to use public transport, cycle and walk through the town centre, and he recognised the frustration of residents for whom this was not a viable option due to work and family commitments.
- 7.7.2 The majority of members felt strongly that the objectives of the scheme had not been achieved, as rather than having a plan to get people walking, cycling and out of their cars, traffic had simply been pushed out of the town centre to other surrounding roads and residential areas. Members acknowledged the concerns raised by members of the public that due to the resulting congestion on surrounding roads, the length and time of their daily journeys had significantly increased.
- 7.7.3 Reference was made to the 6,000 signature petition and some members were strongly of the view that the residents and local business owners who had been badly affected by the closure had not been adequately listened to by CBC.
- 7.7.4 In response to a question, it was clarified that the 6,000 signature petition related to the initial scheme (before the amendments to the ETROs were implemented on 3 June 2019) and not the scheme under consideration.
- 7.7.5 A member stressed that mitigation measures to address the traffic displacement on the surrounding, largely residential roads, should have been undertaken at the commencement of the trial, to not have done so was a significant failure. There was concern that there appeared to be no coherent plan to implement any mitigation measures in the future.
- 7.7.6 A member expressed support for the scheme and spoke positively about the modal shift and how the scheme had greatly improved the level of choice in the way

people travelled in Cheltenham. Reference was made to the climate change emergency and consequently how it should be made as easy as possible for people to make decisions about travelling in a more sustainable way. There was a concern that if Boots Corner was re-opened to general traffic then this would all be reversed and fewer people would walk, cycle and get the bus to Cheltenham.

- 7.7.7 One member made the point that taking brave decisions was not easy and they recognised that some aspects of the scheme could have been done differently. They were of the view that the scheme should be made permanent, referring to the fact that the CBC Cabinet had backed the scheme and suggested that if the Committee did not do the same then it would go against the democratic will of Cheltenham. He emphasised that it was a scheme in progress; if the ETROs of Phase 4 of the CTP were made permanent then mitigation measures could still be undertaken to make improvements where needed.
- 7.7.8 In conclusion, the majority view of the Committee was that the agenda documentation, the information presented and the responses to questions were not sufficiently compelling in demonstrating why the Phase 4 ETROs should be made permanent and did not therefore outweigh the concerns and issues raised by members of the public during their representations to the Committee.
- 7.7.9 The Committee therefore

Resolved

To recommend that Gloucestershire County Council Cabinet:

- **Abandon the current Phase 4 ETROs and revert back to the permanent TROs which were in place immediately prior to the Phase 4 trial.**

To recommend that whether or not Cabinet agrees to abandon the Phase 4 ETROs and revert back to the permanent TROs, Cabinet should note that:

- **Capital investment was needed to improve the sequence of the traffic signals on the town centre ring road to make the routes more useable.**
- **Clearer strategic route signage was needed throughout the town centre, to enable motorists to navigate their way around effectively.**
- **Action needed to be undertaken on addressing the conflict between pedestrians and vehicles at various points in the town centre.**

Chair

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Meeting concluded at 4.36 pm