

Responses to formal representation comments

This document provides Gloucestershire County Council's responses to comments made as formal representations to the Cheltenham Transport Plan Phase 4 Original Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) in Cheltenham town centre.

We recommend reading all the comment responses to fully understand what has happened under the current experiment and how things have been and are being dealt with.

Following consideration of all the formal representations received, Gloucestershire County Council and Cheltenham Borough Council have decided to run revised experimental TROs in the town centre for 6 months from Monday 3rd June 2019. Further details of this can be found on the 'Phase 4 Amendment – Boots Corner Trial Changes' webpage. To fully understand the responses in this document it is recommended that you familiarise yourself with the details of the revised experimental TROs.

If you wish to comment or make a formal representation about the Phase 4 Amendment experimental orders, then that will be possible once it commences on the 3rd June 2019. Details around this can be found on the Phase 4 Amendment webpage.

Please note that any formal representations made regarding the Phase 4 Original experimental orders will not be used to assess the Phase 4 Amendment experimental orders. You will need to make a new formal representation regarding the Phase 4 Amendment experimental orders if you wish your comments to be considered towards making a final decision on what is introduced permanently.

Comments responded to in this document:

- Loss of Disabled Badge Holder Only spaces in the town centre.
- Air quality has become worse on roads which have seen an increase in traffic.
- Congestion and driving journey times (and costs) across the town have increased.
- There has been an increase in vehicles using Rodney Road and on through the section of the High Street into Winchcombe Street, which has resulted in difficulties for pedestrians crossing the road during busy periods and an increase in speeding issues at quieter periods.
- There has been an increase in vehicles using St Pauls Road resulting in difficulties for pedestrians crossing the road during busy periods, congestion issues for vehicles using the road and an increase in speeding issues at quieter periods.
- Businesses in the town centre have suffered as a result of the access and delivery restrictions.
- Signage of routes across the town is not clear.
- Delivery vehicles park on the carriageway in Post Office Lane obstructing the lane entirely. This can cause congestion and significant delays as vehicles cannot divert through the town centre.
- Confusion caused by the Prohibition of Driving and Bus Gate arrangement.
- The town centre needs to be fully pedestrianised with buses, taxis and other vehicles banned from driving through.
- The planters, seating, bike racks and fake grass which have been introduced in the Boots corner area of town are of poor visual quality and make the area look a mess.

Loss of Disabled Badge Holder Only spaces in the town centre

As well as the response below, please also refer to the FAQs (linked to back on the main webpage) for further information regarding parking for disabled badge holders in the town centre.

As a result of the Prohibition of Driving restriction introduced in the town centre some Disabled Badge Holders Only (DBHO) parking was lost in Pittville Street (and replaced by Taxi parking). However, new additional DBHO parking was created in other locations around the town centre and an increase in DBHO parking in the town centre has been achieved as a result of the Cheltenham Transport Plan scheme.

There is now new or additional DBHO parking around key locations in the town centre such as the following:

- The Promenade
- Cheltenham Library and The Wilson Museum
- The Town Hall
- Winchcombe Street
- The High Street (between Winchcombe Street and Bath Road)

As part of the revised experiment to be introduced further DBHO parking will be introduced on Winchcombe Street. This new DBHO parking will be within approximately 35m of the High Street and within approximately 110m of shops such as Marks and Spencer. The High Street between the DBHO parking on Winchcombe Street and these shops has several benches and seating areas available for those who may require rests along the route. New parking opportunities for disabled badge holders will also be created on Clarence Parade, which will now have no access restrictions in place.

In total, an additional 6 new DBHO parking spaces will have been created within the town centre as a result of the Cheltenham Transport Plan scheme.

Air quality has become worse on roads which have seen an increase in traffic

In two-tier authorities, Air Quality monitoring is delegated to the District level. Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) will be assessing the local air quality situation for 2018 once the last month's (December) data is received and the national bias adjustment figure released.

CBC are also awaiting the outcome of a 'Detailed Air Quality Assessment' which the Council has commissioned. All of this will inform an Air Quality Action Plan, containing measures to improve air quality and protect health, particularly at any locations where relevant limits are exceeded.

Both CBC and Gloucestershire County Council are also part of a countywide Air Quality and Health Partnership and will take guidance from public health colleagues about the effectiveness of future interventions.

The Cheltenham Transport Plan is certainly encouraging modal shift, with Stagecoach reporting 500 extra passenger journeys per week and data identifying an increase in cycling and walking through the town centre. This points to an increasing reduction in people choosing to drive through town and a gradual reduction in cars on surrounding routes.

The Council continues to investigate and implement schemes for improved bus, cycle and walking routes around the town, aimed at making it safer and easier for people to travel around without the need to drive.

Congestion and driving journey times (and costs) across the town have increased

Some people may have found it now takes them longer to drive across the town to their destination on certain routes. There are however some things for people to consider with regards to journey times:

- Are you aware of all the routes available to you to get across town, and if so have you tried them all? It may be worth speaking to others to discuss route options, using route planning options on Google or Bing maps and exploring alternative routes through the town.
- Have you considered other means of travel? You may find out that cycling, walking, buses or taxis could be a faster, easier and a possibly cheaper option.
- Data is suggesting a gradual modal shift for journeys, both in Cheltenham and nationally, with numbers on buses, cycling and walking increasing. Over time this could lead to a reduction of cars on routes, meaning those who have to drive for particular journeys begin to experience reduced journey times.
- Assessments of junctions which have seen an increase in traffic are being carried out, with improvements being considered. Already initial improvements have been made to traffic signals on the St Georges Street / St Margaret's Road junction.
- Gloucestershire County Council are looking at undertaking a separate review of the traffic signals on the A4019 corridor next year. The A4019 is a strategic route across northern Cheltenham. The planned growth to the North and West of Cheltenham will likely place additional challenges along this route. The planned study will look at how the corridor can be adapted to accommodate the current and future volumes.
- The revised experiment will include removing access restrictions from Clarence Parade and a section of Clarence Street, along with making these roads two-way to all vehicles. These changes should help reduce congestion and journey times around these roads and on other routes leading to and from them.

There has been an increase in vehicles using Rodney Road and on through the section of the High Street into Winchcombe Street, which has resulted in difficulties for pedestrians crossing the road during busy periods and an increase in speeding issues at quieter periods

The County Council is currently developing options with local businesses and Councillors which would help calm and slow traffic along Rodney Road and the High Street into Winchcombe Street and provide improved crossing facilities for pedestrians where appropriate. Any options deemed suitable would be introduced to tie in with the revised experimental restrictions being introduced in the town centre.

There has been an increase in vehicles using St Pauls Road resulting in difficulties for pedestrians crossing the road during busy periods, congestion issues for vehicles using the road and an increase in speeding issues at quieter periods

The County Council is currently considering options for St Pauls Road to:

- help calm traffic
- ease traffic flow
- Improve crossing opportunities for pedestrians where appropriate.

Any options deemed suitable would be introduced to tie in with the revised experimental restrictions being introduced in the town centre.

Businesses in the town centre have suffered as a result of the access and delivery restrictions

As part of the revised experimental restrictions, Clarence Parade and Clarence Street (up to Post Office Lane) will no longer be subject to access restrictions. This will improve the situation for deliveries/collections and accesses to businesses along these sections of roads along with businesses on surrounding streets in the town centre. As well as removing access restrictions, new dedicated loading bays for deliveries will be added on these sections of roads, further improving the situation for deliveries/collections.

Although the route along Pittville Street through to Albion Street will continue to have access restrictions as part of the revised experiment, loading / unloading for deliveries and collections will be possible between 6pm and 10am. This is a commonplace situation for many town and city centres around the country, and a situation that previously existed for much of Cheltenham High Street. To greater benefit businesses in the town centre, new dedicated loading bays will be added on these roads to further improve the situation for deliveries/collections during the 6pm to 10am loading/unloading period.

It is worth noting that since the experimental access restrictions were introduced, a number of new and high-profile businesses have moved in to the town centre, with further businesses due to open. Many businesses having closures elsewhere in the country have remained operating in Cheltenham town centre. Data has been gathered which shows an increase in footfall in the town centre since the experiment began, showing people are continuing to visit the town centre.

Signage of routes across the town is not clear

The County Council will be carrying out a review of route signage across the whole town to consider whether any suitable improvements can be made, whilst acknowledging that proposals are commensurate with the trial status of the project.

With regards to the town centre access restrictions, currently all key routes and destinations are signed along appropriate routes which avoid the access restrictions. Advance signage on the approach to the access restrictions is in place warning of the restrictions ahead and directing people in the appropriate direction to avoid them. Any amendments required for the revised restriction arrangements will be made prior to the introduction of the revised experiment.

Google Maps were informed about the trial restrictions and they have updated their mapping, so it no longer directs routes along Clarence Street through 'Boots Corner'. The national body that communicates map changes to Satnav companies (GeoPlace) does not pick up on any temporary or experimental closures. They will only do this if the closure becomes permanent at some point in the future.

Digital devices have an advisory function only. It is the driver's obligation to drive with due care and attention and it is their responsibility to read, understand and follow traffic signs / road markings.

Delivery vehicles park on the carriageway in Post Office Lane obstructing the lane entirely. This can cause congestion and significant delays as vehicles cannot divert through the town centre

New No Waiting At Any Time / No Loading At Any Time restrictions will be introduced on Post Office Lane as part of the revised experiment. Obstructing the highway is an offence

that can be dealt with by the Police whether waiting restrictions are in place or not, however these new restrictions will mean that anyone who stops and obstructs the carriageway can be dealt with by Civil Parking Enforcement officers.

Loading / unloading activities for businesses along the lane can take place in existing off-carriageway loading/parking areas and on surrounding streets where appropriate. As well as existing loading bays and areas on surrounding streets, new dedicated loading bays will be introduced on Clarence Parade, Clarence Street, Imperial Circus and the Promenade as part of the revised experiment.

Confusion caused by the Prohibition of Driving and Bus Gate arrangement

The revised experiment will consist of a simplified arrangement of the Bus Gate and Prohibition of Driving restrictions. Although all of the current arrangements feature standard and explicit signing found within the Highway Code, people should find this new arrangement less confusing. Please see the Phase 4 Amendment webpage for more information and plans of the new restrictions and arrangement.

The town centre needs to be fully pedestrianised with buses, taxis and other vehicles banned from driving through

There are several groups of vehicles which need access along certain routes such as emergency services, bullion, post office and vehicles required for building and highway maintenance. It would not be appropriate to prevent access for these vehicles.

Buses, taxis and private hire vehicles have been included as exemptions to keep good access options to these parts of the town centre for the disabled and less mobile. For all, allowing buses to travel the route allows quicker bus journeys times and access right into the centre of town, thereby providing encouragement and an incentive for people to use the bus rather than their car. This of course has the benefits of reduced vehicular air pollution and congestion in and around the town due to the reduction in cars.

Some people responding to initial consultations about the scheme were keen for buses, taxis and private hire vehicles to remain passing through the town centre to provide a passing surveillance deterrent towards crime.

Currently temporary measures to calm and slow vehicles through the town centre have been introduced and these measures help to create a more pedestrian focused and friendly environment. Should the experimental access restrictions be introduced permanently then much improved permanent features would be introduced to create a far more pedestrian focused and friendly environment, which would calm and slow vehicles travelling through even further than the current situation. Cheltenham Borough Council is currently developing proposals for the enhancement of this area of the town should the access restrictions become permanent.

The planters, seating, bike racks and fake grass which have been introduced in the Boots corner area of town are of poor visual quality and make the area look a mess

These features have been introduced as temporary features by Cheltenham Borough Council whilst the access restrictions are trialled experimentally. They aim to provide temporary enhancements to this area for pedestrians and cyclists and to calm and slow traffic travelling through.

Should the experimental access restrictions be introduced permanently then much improved permanent features and enhancements would be introduced, both visually and in quality. These features and improvements would create a much-enhanced public realm environment. The current temporary features would then be relocated to other appropriate locations in Cheltenham.

Cheltenham Borough Council is currently developing proposals for the enhancement of this area of the town should the access restrictions become permanent.