

Report of the Traffic Regulation Committee 16 December 2019

Cheltenham Transport Plan Phase 4 - Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs)

1. Context

The purpose of the meeting was to consider all of the representations regarding the final version ETROs and make a recommendation to Cabinet on 20 December 2019 whether to: -

- (i) Make the current Phase 4 Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs) permanent; or
- (ii) Abandon the current Phase 4 ETROs and revert back to the permanent Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) which were in place immediately prior to the Phase 4 trial.

Ahead of the committee meeting all committee members had attended a site visit to the Boots corner location and the key roads/points of interest.

On 16 December 2019 the committee heard from the

- Scheme Promoter, Cheltenham Borough Council;
- the Highway Authority, Gloucestershire County Council;
- received public and member supplementary questions, and oral representations from 44 people (36 in objection and 9 in support)

2. Key discussion points: -

- The strength of public feeling in objection to the closure of Boots Corner to general traffic, including the 6000 strong petition received by Cheltenham Borough Council earlier in the year. When making their representations at the meeting, local residents negatively affected by the closure, strongly emphasised the significant detrimental impact it has had on their lives. By closing Boots Corner, to re-connect the high street, members heard that the traffic has simply been displaced to Swindon Road, Rodney Road, St George's Street, St James Square, St Luke's, St Pauls and residential streets, as motorists seek out alternative routes to avoid the bus gate. The surrounding narrow roads are not suitable for the increased levels of traffic, and residents are suffering from increased noise pollution, and traffic congestion right outside of their homes.
- There is a concern that the increased levels of traffic on the roads which are being used by motorists as alternative routes will have a negative effect on the air quality in those areas and adversely affect the lives of the local residents. This would also negate any of the air quality improvements which may have been made in the town centre resulting from the closure of Boots Corner.
- Whilst one of the objectives of the Cheltenham Transport Plan is to facilitate a modal shift in more people using public transport and cycling and walking

through the town centre, the committee understand that using alternative forms of transport other than cars is not a viable option for some due to work and family commitments. Instead of helping to achieve this objective, the closure of this key route to general traffic, has resulted in increasing the length and time of journeys due to congestion on the alternative routes.

- Members heard from some of the independent business owners in the town centre whose businesses are suffering as a result of the closure of Boots Corner. The committee is concerned that the closure is preventing residents and tourists alike from visiting the town as it is too confusing for them to drive around the town centre, having to avoid the bus gate. A reduction in the recorded levels of traffic in the town centre is being held up as a positive impact resulting from the closure of Boots Corner. However, this could indicate that there are less people visiting the town centre to shop and visit the restaurants.

3. Recommendation

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.

The committee also resolved 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 is 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 is needed throughout the town centre, to enable motorists to navigate their way around effectively.
- Action needs to be undertaken on addressing the conflict between pedestrians and vehicles at various points in the town centre.

Cllr Will Windsor Clive – Chair

Cllr Alan Preest – Vice Chair

17 December 2019