

31st October 2013

Agenda Item: 12

REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR, HIGHWAYS**BRIDGE STREET, BRIDGE PLACE AND CASTLE STREET WORKSOP –
PERMANENT TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER 2013 CONSULTATION****Purpose of the Report**

1. To report to Committee the results of consultation carried out during 2012 in respect of vehicular access to Worksop town centre and seek approval to commence a revised consultation and subsequent statutory procedure to develop a permanent Traffic Regulation Order in respect of the pedestrianised lengths of Bridge Street, Bridge Place and Castle Street in Worksop.

Information and Advice

2. Members may recall that an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) was introduced in Worksop on 22nd May 2012 aimed at significantly reducing the levels of vehicular activity along the pedestrianised section of Bridge Place, Bridge Street and Castle Street in the town centre. This was following representations received from Bassetlaw District Council, local traders and the public that the pedestrian environment was being compromised by unreasonable levels of vehicular activity.
3. The ETRO had the effect of not allowing any vehicles on Bridge Street, except for loading between the hours of 4pm -10am (on all days). The proposal removed access for all blue badge holders and special access permit holders on sections of Bridge Place (between Priors Centre access and Ryton Street), Bridge Street (between Ryton Street and Potter Street), and Castle Street (off Bridge Street to Swan Inn) at all times. To support these proposals Bassetlaw District Council allocated 20 additional spaces for use by disabled drivers in off-street car parks. These spaces have no parking charge and were provided specifically to offer disabled motorists displaced from the pedestrianised area an opportunity to continue parking close to the town centre.
4. Following the introduction of the Orders the effects were monitored to determine the impact upon the town and its users. Observations demonstrated that there was a significantly reduced number of vehicle manoeuvres taking place within the pedestrianised area. Whilst it was evident that pedestrian activity was being encouraged several representations were received from holders of Special Access Permits (SAP's) that the changes were causing severe difficulty. The objections were supported by Disability Nottinghamshire.
5. The representations concerned the fact that many holders of SAP's have severe mobility problems and require unrestricted access to essential shops and services by private vehicle.

The experimental order prevented such access and it was claimed failed to offer suitable alternative arrangements to allow holders of SAP's to continue visiting the town centre.

6. In view of these concerns a decision was taken to remove the Experimental Order and embark upon an extensive consultation exercise to establish a proposal which will balance the needs of all users of the town centre. The order was removed on Wednesday 4th July 2012 and the previous access and parking arrangements restored.
7. The making of the ETRO was the subject of reports to the Transport & Highways Portfolio Holder dated 7th February 2012 and 16th April 2012. The removal was the subject of a report to Transport and Highways Committee on 12th July 2012 which resolved that 'a fresh consultation exercise (be) undertaken to establish an alternative regime for the town centre. Further proposals will be brought to this Committee following this consultation period'.
8. A consultation exercise was launched on 22nd August 2012 and all efforts taken to generate as much public interest and response as possible. In order to ensure balance in respect of the issues being considered the content of the consultation material was agreed prior to its circulation with Disability Nottinghamshire which had been very involved during the consultation period.
9. Around 3,000 leaflets were distributed in the Worksop area of which 115 were specifically targeted to disabled blue badge holders and 392 to holders of SAP's, in addition a number of organisations representing various protected groups were specifically sent copies of the leaflet for consideration and/or distribution. The item was covered extensively in the Worksop Guardian and by other local media. Consultation leaflets were sent directly to shop and business owners including market stall holders. Additionally the consultation was promoted via the County Council website with facility to return forms electronically.
10. A total of 997 responses were returned which is considered to be a sample of sufficient size to be representative of views. 26% of those responding are holders of SAP's and 37% blue badge holders. A number of key findings are summarised:
 - The majority of respondents agree that traffic in the pedestrianised zone is a concern. Many believe this is exacerbated by abuse of the blue badge system and illegal parking by other drivers in the zone and could be relieved by better enforcement.
 - The majority of respondents, including the majority of those with a disability, agree that blue badge holders should not be given access to the zone as there is adequate disabled blue badge parking within the town.
 - The majority of respondents disagreed with allowing access to SAP's holders. However, the majority of these respondents are not disabled and do not have problems in accessing the facilities of the town. The majority of disabled respondents would prefer access given to SAP's holders on all non-market days although over half would be happy with access on limited days.
 - Most frequently mentioned other comments included reference to car free zones in other towns (96 responses) and 240 people commented that the pedestrian zones in Worksop should have no cars at all. The need for enforcement of the orders to be more rigorous was also mentioned on 82 occasions.

Proposal

11. Following on-going representations being received that the pedestrian environment was still being compromised by unreasonable levels of vehicular activity, a meeting was held on 11th September 2013 with officers and members from Bassetlaw District Council and Nottinghamshire County Council. In light of these discussions it is proposed that new

restrictions be considered for the area which reflect the views expressed in the consultation and take account of views expressed during the ETRO period.

12. A balanced proposal is required for the town centre which meets the needs of all its users including those with varying degrees and types of disability. To this end it is recommended that a scheme be introduced (subject to consultation and the necessary statutory procedure) to include the following:

Bridge Street (between Newcastle Street and Potter Street) and the pedestrianised section of Castle Street off Bridge Street

- Allows access for Special Access Permit Holders at all times except Market Days (which are Wednesday, Friday and Saturday) on the inclined section of Bridge Street (between Newcastle Street and Potter Street) and the pedestrianised section of Castle Street off Bridge Street.
- Allows access for loading vehicles on all days before 10am and after 4.00pm.
- Does not permit access at any time for Disabled Blue Badge Holders.

Bridge Place (between Priory Centre car park access and Ryton Street) and Bridge Street (between Ryton Street and Newcastle Street)

- Does not permit access at any time for Special Access Permit Holders.
- Does not permit access at any time for Disabled Blue Badge Holders.
- Allows access for loading vehicles on all days before 10am and after 4.00pm.

The proposals are shown on enclosed drawing JB/BridgeSt/01.

13. It is intended that as part of this proposal additional designated disabled parking bays for special access permit holders only will be allocated on street near the town centre to offer greater opportunity for severely disabled people to park and access services in the proposed pedestrianised area. Discussions will also take place with Bassetlaw District Council to establish any potential to improve the shopmobility scheme in the town and aid with further improved accessibility to the town.
14. To implement the revised scheme it is proposed that prior to embarking on the statutory procedure required to make a traffic order, another consultation is undertaken based on the revised restriction detailed in paragraph 12. All efforts will be taken to generate as much public interest and response as possible. In order to ensure balance in respect of the issues being considered. The content of the consultation material will be discussed prior to its circulation with Disability Nottinghamshire. The 997 respondents from the consultation in 2012 will be targeted to ascertain views on the revised proposal.
15. It is considered that four full days unlimited access to the pedestrianised area on the steepest section of Bridge Street reflects the views which were expressed as part of the consultation exercise and also expressed locally by holders of SAP's. This will allow holders of SAP's to continue to access essential services within the town by private car and park as close as possible to these destinations on the steepest sections. It will also offer a combination of days throughout the week when the town market can operate with no intrusion from traffic and also offers days when there is no market and as little intrusion as is possible from vehicles. It should be noted however that it will be necessary to permit limited access to the pedestrian zone such as for emergency access, security (bullion) vehicles and essential repairs to utilities equipment. These are standard exemptions applied throughout the County in Pedestrian Zones.

16. Currently there is private off street parking spaces situated primarily off the section of Bridge Street between Newcastle Street and Potter Street. The proposal would retain access similar to the current arrangements. Access would include entry to the restricted area before 10am and after 4pm with exit at any time, this would be achieved by the wording of the traffic order. On market days exiting these areas may be restrictive, but this would be no different to the current situation.
17. Restrictions to all traffic except for loading within prescribed hours and emergency vehicles on the flat section of Bridge Place and Bridge Street will offer days throughout the week when the town market can operate with no intrusion from traffic and also offers days when there is no market and as little intrusion as is possible from vehicles. On market days access for loading vehicle up to 10am may be difficult with the stalls in place. This will be considered as part of the consultation by engaging with the district council, local businesses and stall holders.
18. All interested parties will have the opportunity through the statutory Traffic Regulation Order consultation process to comment on the proposals and any objections received will be considered via the County Council's standard procedures.

Other Options Considered

19. There are numerous variations relating to the hours of access and which groups may be permitted access. Many of these have been considered in the context of the previous consultation exercise but discounted as not being in keeping with its findings.

Comments from Local Member

20. The member for Worksop West is in support of the proposal.

Reasons for Recommendations

21. It is considered that the proposal represents a scheme which seeks to balance the needs of all users of the town centre and reflects the wishes of the wider community as stated via the consultation exercise carried out in 2012.

Statutory and Policy Implications

22. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Equality Implications

23. The Council has a duty to provide a fair service to all users of the town. However, the Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies 'to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'. Disability is a protected characteristic. Therefore the Council has a duty to make reasonable adjustments so that disabled people can continue to use the facilities of the town.
24. Details of how the Council has considered the needs of disabled people is included in the body of this report. As the revised scheme is developed and consultation undertaken, their needs will continue to be assessed and will be incorporated into a revised equality impact

assessment that will be included in any future committee report. Previous equality impact assessments are available on request.

Financial Implications

25. The introduction of designated disabled parking bays in the town centre and necessary alterations to the traffic signs at Bridge Street and Bridge Place is forecast to cost approximately £20,000 and can be met from the Local Transport Plan budget in 2014/15, subject to the necessary council approval.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is RECOMMENDED that a consultation is started and statutory process is commenced and subject to its completion a permanent Traffic Regulation Order be made which:

Bridge Street (between Newcastle Street and Potter Street) and the pedestrianised section of Castle Street off Bridge Street

- Allows access for Special Access Permit Holders at all times except Market Days (which are Wednesday, Friday and Saturday) on the inclined section of Bridge Street (between Newcastle Street and Potter Street) and the pedestrianised section of Castle Street off Bridge Street.
- Allows access for loading vehicles on all days before 10am and after 4.00pm.
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Bridge Place (between Priory Centre car park access and Ryton Street) and Bridge Street (between Ryton Street and Newcastle Street)

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- Allows access for loading vehicles on all days before 10am and after 4.00pm.

Introduction of additional on-street designated disabled parking spaces in the town centre where available.

Name of Report Author

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Title of Report Author

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Constitutional Comments (SHB 10/10/2013)

26. Committee have power to decide the Recommendation.

Financial Comments (TMR 10/10/2013)

27. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 25 of the report.

Background Papers

Report to Transport and Highways Portfolio Meeting: 7th February 2012

Report to Transport and Highways Portfolio Meeting 16th April 2012

Report to Transport and Highways Committee 12th July 2012

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

Worksop West, Councillor Greaves

Worksop East, Councillor Gilfoyle

Worksop North, Councillor Fielding

Worksop North East and Carlton, Councillor Rhodes