CET/23/44 Cabinet 12 July 2023

# Newton Abbot, Queen Street – Pedestrian Enhancements

Report of the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

#### 1) Recommendation

That the Cabinet be asked to:

- (a) approve the design and construction of pedestrian enhancements on Queen Street, Newton Abbot, as shown in Appendix 1, at an estimated cost of £1,300,000; and
- (b) approve an increase to the Climate Change, Environment & Transport 2023/24 capital programme by £477,500, funded by external grant;
- (c) give delegated powers to the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highway Management and Local Member, to make minor amendments to the scheme as required.

# 2) Introduction

This report sets out a recommendation to approve the design and construction of a permanent pedestrian enhancement scheme for Queen Street, Newton Abbot at an estimated cost of £1,300,000. This recommendation follows Teignbridge Highways and Traffic Orders Committee's (HATOC) resolutions to support the proposals in July 2022 and to make and seal the associated Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) in June 2023. Figure 1 below shows the corridor identified for improvement.

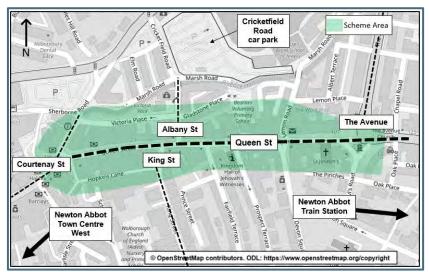


Figure 1: Scheme Area and Geography

Queen Street has an extensive number of shops, independent businesses and services and provides an important connection between the town centre and Newton Abbot railway station. However, the corridor is dominated by motorised vehicles with significant space allocated to accommodating through traffic and on-street parking, particularly west of The Avenue. This arrangement means that footways are narrow in places and the street, and its side roads, can be difficult to cross. Overall, there is limited space and facilities for pedestrians who are the dominant users of the town centre. There is a need for intervention to tackle these problems, create a better urban environment for people visiting Newton Abbot and to help reduce carbon emissions in response to the climate emergency.

Proposals leverage significant central Government funding from multiple funding sources, demonstrating material Government support for investment in Newton Abbot. Teignbridge District Council (TDC) secured £685,387 from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' (DLUHC) Future High Street Fund (FHSF) in May 2021. As the highway authority, Devon County Council (DCC) supported the bid to Government and are helping to enable the walking and cycling elements of the funding package to be realised in close partnership with TDC. Further to this, in May 2023, DCC successfully secured an additional £477,500 towards the scheme through Tranche 4 of the Government's Active Travel Fund programme. This is not yet included in the capital programme, which is why recommendation (b) has been included in this report.

Approval for construction will enable detailed design to continue, with procurement programmed for Autumn 2023 and construction anticipated to start in Spring 2024.

# 3) Proposals

The proposals are a package of measures to enhance Queen Street, Newton Abbot between Courtenay Street and The Avenue and neighbouring side roads. These have been developed in close partnership with TDC, informed by extensive public consultation and amended by Teignbridge HATOC. Proposals are shown in Appendix 1 and a summary is also detailed below.

- Widened Footways Widened footways will give pedestrians more space to move and access shops/services, also improving access for those using wheelchairs, mobility scooters, buggies etc. The focus of widening is at the western end of Queen Street, between Courtenay Street and Albany Street. The southern footways will also be widened between Albany Street and the existing zebra crossing.
- Improved Crossings Crossings at side roads will make junctions safer and easier to cross, with priority given to pedestrians instead of vehicles. Pedestrian priority raised tables will be provided at every side road between Devon Square and Hopkins Lane, excluding Lemon Road, meaning crossings will be level with footways. A narrower carriageway, partnered with a reduced speed limit, will make Queen Street itself easier to cross. A new zebra crossing west of the War Memorial will also provide a new formal crossing opportunity.
- Enhanced Greening & Seating Enhanced greening and seating is central to making the corridor a more appealing destination. New in-ground tree planting is proposed on

the northern footway between Courtenay Street and Albany Street and at The Avenue. This will be complemented by new doubled-headed flower poles on the southern footway, alongside benches and planters between Fairfield and Prospect Terrace. To ensure high quality and deliverable provision, a specialist landscape architect team was engaged and proposals have been developed alongside Newton Abbot Town Council.

 Public Transport & Cycle Provision – The existing bus stop outside the Catholic Church will be enhanced to create a bus lay-by. A reduction in general traffic will make access by cycle more attractive. Whilst cycle trips will remain westbound only from The Avenue, north/south movements will be enhanced through the removal of traffic to/from King Street. New cycle parking is also proposed. Proposals will complement separate FHSF proposals, to improve the National Cycle Network Route 2 which runs parallel to Queen Street. Working as a wider package, enhancements to public transport and cycling provision will help strengthen active travel and bus connectivity with Newton Abbot's town centre and support decarbonisation objectives.

Road layout proposals will be enabled by complementary TROs, approved by Teignbridge HATOC in June 2023:

- **20mph Zone** A new 20mph speed limit between The Avenue and Courtenay Street on Queen Street and along a short section of Albany Street. This will further enhance the environment for visitors and safety for Bearnes Voluntary Primary School.
- Traffic Regulation The introduction of the prohibition of motor vehicles on lengths of Devon Square, King Street, Oak Place and Queen Street; one way and width restriction on a length of Hopkins Lane; length restriction on lengths of Devon Square, King Street and Queen Street. Removal of general traffic from the corridor is central to achieving a transformational, attractive pedestrian environment, with reduced carbon emissions and better air quality. In particular, access on Queen Street, west of Albany Street, will be restricted to buses, cycles and loading. Taxis will be able to access this area to stop to pick up or set down passengers. Drivers of vehicles displaying a blue badge will also be able to access to stop and pick up or set down a disabled person. Through traffic will be encouraged to remain on The Avenue and general traffic accessing Queen Street will then be routed north on Albany Street when leaving Queen Street.
- Waiting/Parking/Loading The amendment of waiting, parking and loading restrictions. Approximately 55% of on-street parking is proposed to be removed within the scheme area, including the removal of all on-street parking between Courtenay Street and Albany Street. On-street disabled parking-only provision will increase overall within the scheme area. The number of loading-only bays will be increased in the scheme area and will include two flexible loading bays on Queen Street, west of King Street.

# 4) **Options / Alternatives**

**Do Nothing** – To keep the status quo would be to maintain traffic dominance within Newton Abbot Town Centre. Although on-street parking would continue to be convenient, this would be to the detriment of the pedestrian environment. Town centre visitors would not benefit from the better walking, cycling and bus links or the additional footway space and seating to improve accessibility and inclusivity and allow people to spend more time enjoying the area's shops and services. This option would be out of step with the ambitions of the Heart of Teignbridge Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, which seeks to respond positively to the climate emergency and improve the health and wellbeing of local residents. This would also necessitate the return of significant Government funding, potentially risking reputational damage for securing future scheme funding.

**Scaled back scheme** – It is not considered feasible to progress an alternative permanent scheme at this stage, as this would require significant additional design work, delaying the delivery of the scheme, risking the funding award, and could require the advertisement of alternative TROs.

# 5) Consultations

The proposals have undergone significant public and stakeholder consultation at every stage of project development:

- Teignbridge District Council Public Consultation (June 2020)
- Stakeholder Consultation (December 2021/January 2022)
- Devon County Council and Teignbridge District Council Public Consultation (April-June 2022)
- Statutory TRO consultation (October/November 2022)
- Newton Abbot Town Council Representatives Meetings (Ongoing)

The outcomes of the DCC/TDC joint public consultation were presented to Teignbridge HATOC in July 2022, prior to the committee's resolution to support the scheme. The consultation demonstrated public support for pedestrian enhancements and the provision of new greening and seating. Public support for changes to vehicle access was mixed and there was opposition towards parking removal.

The scarcity of available highway means there is not enough width to deliver the significant public realm improvements, whilst also retaining present levels of on-street parking provision and existing vehicle access. Furthermore, an analysis of parking demand and supply has highlighted that a reduction in provision can be accommodated – ticketing data indicates that a significant number of spaces are unoccupied. A significant proportion of on-street parking (approximately 45%) will remain under the proposals and there are also alternative nearby off-street parking facilities in the vicinity of Queen Street. Figure 2 below shows nearby off-street parking facilities, totalling approximately 830 spaces, significantly outweighing the comparative proposed reduction in Queen Street on-street provision (~33 spaces). The strategic opportunities and benefits delivered by the scheme are considered to outweigh the impacts of removing a proportion of on-street parking and vehicle access.



Figure 2: Nearby Off-Street Parking

Overall, and in light of the scale and high-profile, transformative nature of the scheme, DCC has received a proportionately low number of objections to the subsequent statutory TRO consultation. This is testament to the volume of high quality public consultation that had already taken place over the previous three years. Prior to making a recommendation to Teignbridge HATOC, officers engaged and worked collaboratively with key TRO objectors, including businesses and other key stakeholders, to address concerns about businesses having sufficient loading provision. As a result of this work, Teignbridge HATOC approved the making and sealing of amended TROs, which included additional space for loading, at its June 2023 meeting.

Communication with Newton Abbot Town Council and local businesses will continue as the project proceeds to construction.

# 6) Strategic Plan

Proposals are well-aligned with a range of Strategic Plan priorities and actions. The scheme seeks to prioritise active and sustainable travel over private motorised traffic, whilst still maintaining access for those that rely on it. The proposals' contribution towards enhancing the public realm will make Queen Street a more attractive destination for shopping, dining and for the community to meet. This will help support a green economic recovery from COVID-19.

The table below summarises how the proposals would impact achievement of relevant Strategic Plan actions according to a seven-point scale, whereby -3 represents a large negative impact and +3 represents a large positive impact.

Strategic Plan Priority	Strategic Plan Action	Alignment
Responding to the climate emergency	Support a green recovery from COVID-19	+2 (Moderate positive)
Responding to the climate emergency	Prioritise sustainable travel and transport	+3 (Large positive)

Responding to the climate emergency	Encourage sustainable lifestyles	+3 (Large positive)
Investing in Devon's economic recovery	Secure investment in transport infrastructure	+2 (Moderate positive)
Improving health and wellbeing	Give people greater opportunities for walking and cycling to increase their physical activity	+2 (Moderate positive)
Helping communities to be safe, connected and resilient	Enable a range of transport options, including public transport	+1 (Slight positive)

# 7) Financial Considerations

The scheme is estimated to cost approximately £1,300,000. This cost estimate includes a 15% project risk allowance and 5% to account for optimism bias. In light of recent high inflation and the uncertainty of future inflation, particularly within the construction industry, an additional 10% inflation allowance has been included, alongside a further budget surplus of £144,164. Bespoke values for greening/seating contingency have been adopted, recognising these items will be delivered at the end of the construction period.

The funding package for this scheme can be summarised as follows as a mix of external contributions and grant funding:

Funding Source	Prior Years Spend £	Projected Spend 2023/24 £	Total £
Future High Street Fund	36,627	648,760	685,387
Teignbridge District Council	36,204	45,073	81,277
DCC Local Transport Plan	-	200,000	200,000
Active Travel Fund Tranche 4	-	477,500	477,500
Total	72,831	1,371,333	1,444,164

This arrangement between DCC and TDC has been agreed through the signing of a Funding Agreement, which is in the process of being updated following the recent Active Travel Fund grant award. The DCC £200,000 Local Transport Plan (LTP) grant contribution to the walking and cycling elements of the FHSF package was set out in the Transport Capital Programme update, approved by Cabinet in September 2021. It should be noted that FHSF Government allocation for the 2023/24 financial year is indicative and is subject to imminent confirmation from DLUHC.

The proposal's impact on the revenue budget for maintenance has also been considered as part of scheme design. Footway surfacing is to be replaced like-for-like, recognising the ongoing maintenance benefits afforded by blacktop. Proposed tree planting will utilise specially designed tree pits to ensure the footway is not broken up over time by tree roots. Reduced traffic flows on Queen Street will also result in less wear and tear to the road surface.

# 8) Legal Considerations

The lawful implications of the proposals have been considered and taken into account in the preparation of this report.

The statutory consultation on the TROs, approved by Teignbridge HATOC, was carried out in line with the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. This included a public notice placed in the local press and statutory bodies (e.g. emergency services) being notified of the restrictions. When making a TRO, it is the County Council's responsibility to ensure that all relevant legislation is complied with. This includes Section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 that states that it is the duty of a local authority, so far as practicable, to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of parking facilities.

Enhanced greening and seating is expected to be maintained by Newton Abbot Town Council, however, this arrangement will be subject to their formal agreement and, where necessary, an appropriate maintenance agreement. Greening proposals have been developed with Town Council officers on this understanding.

# 9) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change)

Proposals will improve active travel provision for visitors to Queen Street, encouraging reduced car use. Public transport access is maintained and enhanced, ensuring that proposals support sustainable travel options. It is recognised that some local traffic may have to divert creating longer journeys, however, it is also expected that some users will switch modes rather than simply changing driving route. Alternative parking facilities are on the edge of the town centre and may represent a shorter travel distance for many drivers who would otherwise use the one-way section of Queen Street.

Overall, the reallocation of road space from motorised vehicles to active travel users is expected to have a positive environmental impact, contributing toward tackling climate change. Proposals are expected to cut carbon and deliver air quality benefits, towards the Newton Abbot and Kingsteignton Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), which is included in the scheme extent.

As part of scheme design an Environmental Audit has been carried out, this identified the scheme to be in a surface water flood risk zone. As part of detailed design, engineers will liaise with the flood risk team to mitigate the impact of the proposals.

# 10) Equality Considerations

Where relevant, in coming to a decision the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding

in relation to the protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership (for employment), pregnancy and maternity, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation).

A decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage.

In progressing this proposal, an Impact Assessment has been prepared and is available on the Council's website at <u>https://www.devon.gov.uk/impact/published</u>. The assessment was published in preparation for the scheme's recommendation to Teignbridge HATOC in July 2022.

The Impact Assessment highlights that the environment will be improved for people with additional mobility needs. Proposed crossing improvements and widened footways will make the area safer and more accessible for all users, in particular for those using wheelchairs or mobility scooters. Crossings will be raised at side roads to improve accessibility. Blue Badge holder parking provisions will increase overall in the area and approximately 45% of on-street parking in the area is proposed to remain. Bus services will also be retained, with improved access to the town centre expected to particularly benefit younger people and older people who may not have access to a car or be confident driving into the centre of town. The relaxation of loading restrictions, through the provision of an additional loading bay at the western end of Queen Street, will go further to ensure there is sufficient loading space for businesses.

# 11) Risk Management Considerations

As part of the delivery, project and design risk registers have been maintained and most recently updated in June 2023.

TDC have submitted a Project Adjustment Request to DLUHC to obtain approval for changes to the project details since the FHSF funding award in 2021. As part of this submission, TDC requested an extension to the delivery deadline to the end of the 2024 calendar year. Future procurement agreements will be predicated on obtaining this approval in a timely manner.

A stage 1 road safety audit (RSA) has been undertaken and a response document has been agreed. The problems raised are minor and will be addressed at the detailed design phase of the scheme. Issues concerning the proposals marked for delivery under the FHSF

include: additional road markings, traffic calming on Victoria Place and visibility improvements at the location of the proposed zebra crossing. Further changes to the design will be subject to a stage 2 RSA and could be agreed through delegated powers. The stage 2 RSA is anticipated to have been instructed before Cabinet meet.

# 12) Summary

Proposals will make Queen Street a more attractive, safe and healthy place for visitors and businesses. The improvements to the pedestrian environment, with reduced dominance of vehicles, aim to make everyone feel safe and welcome, with more space for pedestrians to enjoy and access shops and services, with improved accessibility and inclusivity for all, cleaner air and a greener environment.

The scheme details have undergone significant public and stakeholder consultation at every stage of the last three years of project development, culminating in Teignbridge HATOC endorsing the proposals and resolution to make and seal the TROs.

Proposals leverage in excess of £1m of central Government funding from multiple sources, demonstrating material Government support for investment in Newton Abbot. The strategic opportunities and benefits delivered by the scheme are considered to significantly outweigh the impacts of removing a proportion of on-street parking and vehicle access. Approval for construction will enable detailed design to continue, with procurement programmed for Autumn 2023 and construction anticipated to start Spring 2024.

#### Meg Booth

Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport

Electoral Division: Newton Abbot North

Cabinet Member for Highway Management: Councillor Stuart Hughes

#### Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers

Background Paper: Nil

#### **Contact for enquiries:**

Name: Josh Manning Telephone: 01392 383984 Address: Transport Planning, County Hall, Exeter, EX2 4QD

Newton Abbot, Queen Street - Pedestrian Enhancements - Final

