

## **Countess Wear (inbound) bus priority scheme**

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

***Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.***

**Recommendation: It is recommended that:**

- (a) approval in principle be given for the scheme shown on attached plan no. B2300328/100/02 Rev P3, at a provisionally estimated cost of £102,000, to be funded from developer contributions and Local Transport Plan Integrated Block;**
- (b) authority be given to undertake public consultation, and advertise the necessary traffic regulation orders, to be made and sealed if no objections are received;**
- (c) the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment, in consultation with the local member and the Chairman of Exeter HATOC, be given delegated authority to make minor amendments to the scheme design.**

### **1. Summary**

This report seeks approval for a proposed scheme to reduce delays to buses, and improve service reliability, during the AM peak on the inbound approach to the Countess Wear roundabout from the Topsham direction.

### **2. Background/Introduction**

The inbound approach to the Countess Wear roundabout from the Topsham direction is frequently busy in the morning peak, with traffic queuing back as far as Seabrook Mews and sometimes beyond on a regular basis.

Much of this congestion will be related to commuter traffic generated from outside the city by drivers using Topsham Road as an alternative to the signed route from Exmouth via Clyst St Mary and the A376. However, with the addition of 3,500 homes in the Newcourt development, an increasing proportion is likely to be locally generated. Further planning applications have also been submitted for additional residential development on either side of Exeter Road, Topsham. Additional development will increase travel demand on this corridor and improving bus priority to offer more competitive journey times compared with the car will help make travel by bus more attractive and encourage more journeys to be undertaken by public transport.

This approach to the city is currently served by four buses an hour on the service 57 from Exmouth. A limited bus priority facility during the morning peak (7.00am to 10.00am Monday to Friday) already exists on the service road from near the junction with Glasshouse Lane. Buses can enter the service road either from Glasshouse Lane, or via a short slip lane just to the south-east of the Glasshouse Lane junction. They re-enter Topsham Road by another slip lane close to the Countess Wear roundabout. There are no bus stops between these two points, so the use of the service road is optional.

For a number of reasons, the existing bus priority scheme does not fully meet current needs:

- the length of the queue on the approach to the Countess Wear roundabout, particularly during the morning peak period, can result in buses being delayed before reaching a point where they can enter the service road;
- the existing entry point to the service road involves a very tight turn, exacerbated by unrestricted parking on the south western side of the service road;
- overhanging tree branches require double deckers to proceed at very low speed to avoid damage.

For the above reasons, even at times when they are permitted to use it, buses can still encounter significant delays, adversely affecting timekeeping and the attractiveness of the service.

### **3. Proposals**

The proposed scheme is shown diagrammatically on attached plan no. **B2300328/100/02 Rev P3**.

This comprises the following main elements:

- extending the length of the service road that can be used by buses by creating a new bus-only access point to the south-east of the junction of Higher Wear Road.
- Bus and Cycle only restriction on inbound section of service road between Higher Wear Road and Glasshouse Lane, preventing the use of the service road for rat-running traffic.
- Formalising on street parking arrangements through the addition of waiting restrictions on sections of the southern side of the service road. These changes will increase the number of on-street car parking spaces on the service road.
- Providing an additional raised kerb bus stop facility on the service road adjacent to existing Topsham Road stop.

Formal advertising and consultation on the Traffic Regulation Orders will be necessary to implement the proposals.

### **4. Financial Considerations**

The total provisionally estimated cost of the scheme is £102,000, for which up to £43,925 of Section 106 developer funding is currently available. The S106 funding is time constrained and if there is not a commitment to spend it by April 2015 it will need to be returned to the developer.

### **5. Sustainability Considerations**

The growth plans for the city will need more people to travel into the city by alternative modes of travel. The proposals to reduce journey times and improve the reliability of public transport will help reduce people's dependence on the private car and offer a more attractive alternative.

## **6. Carbon Impact Considerations**

The proposals should have a slight positive impact by encouraging the use of public transport and helping to reduce levels of car use.

## **7. Equality Considerations**

No new policies are being recommended in this report and therefore an Equality Impact and Needs Assessment is not considered necessary.

## **8. Legal Considerations**

The traffic order(s) will be advertised in line with the legal requirements.

## **9. Risk Management Considerations**

This proposal has been assessed and all necessary safeguards or actions have been taken to safeguard the Council's position.

## **10. Public Health Impact**

The scheme is likely to have a slight positive public health impact. There is some evidence that the use of public transport, rather than undertaking local journeys by private car, can result in increased physical activity with associated health benefits.

## **11. Options/Alternatives Investigated**

Extending the hours of operation of the existing bus priority was considered to allow use throughout the day. Such a change may have been met with opposition from local residents and with Bridge Road outbound widening scheme coming forward in the next few years, reducing PM peak congestion, there may have been only limited benefit in extending the hours.

The proposals as recommended will provide much needed benefit in the AM peak, and do not prevent the hours of operation to be considered further in future if required.

## **12. Reason for Recommendation/Conclusion**

The Local Transport Plan includes a strategy for Exeter which recognises that with the planned growth in the city it will be necessary to encourage more people to use alternative modes of travel to the private car. Both the *Exeter Bus Growth Strategy: Accommodating Growth* (May 2012) and the *Newcourt Masterplan Transportation Access Strategy (addendum report)* (January 2011) more specifically identify the benefits of extending the existing Topsham Road bus priority scheme. With increased growth impacting on the Topsham Road corridor, these proposals will offer more competitive bus journey times to the private car.

Dave Black  
Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

**Electoral Division: Priory & St Leonards**

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

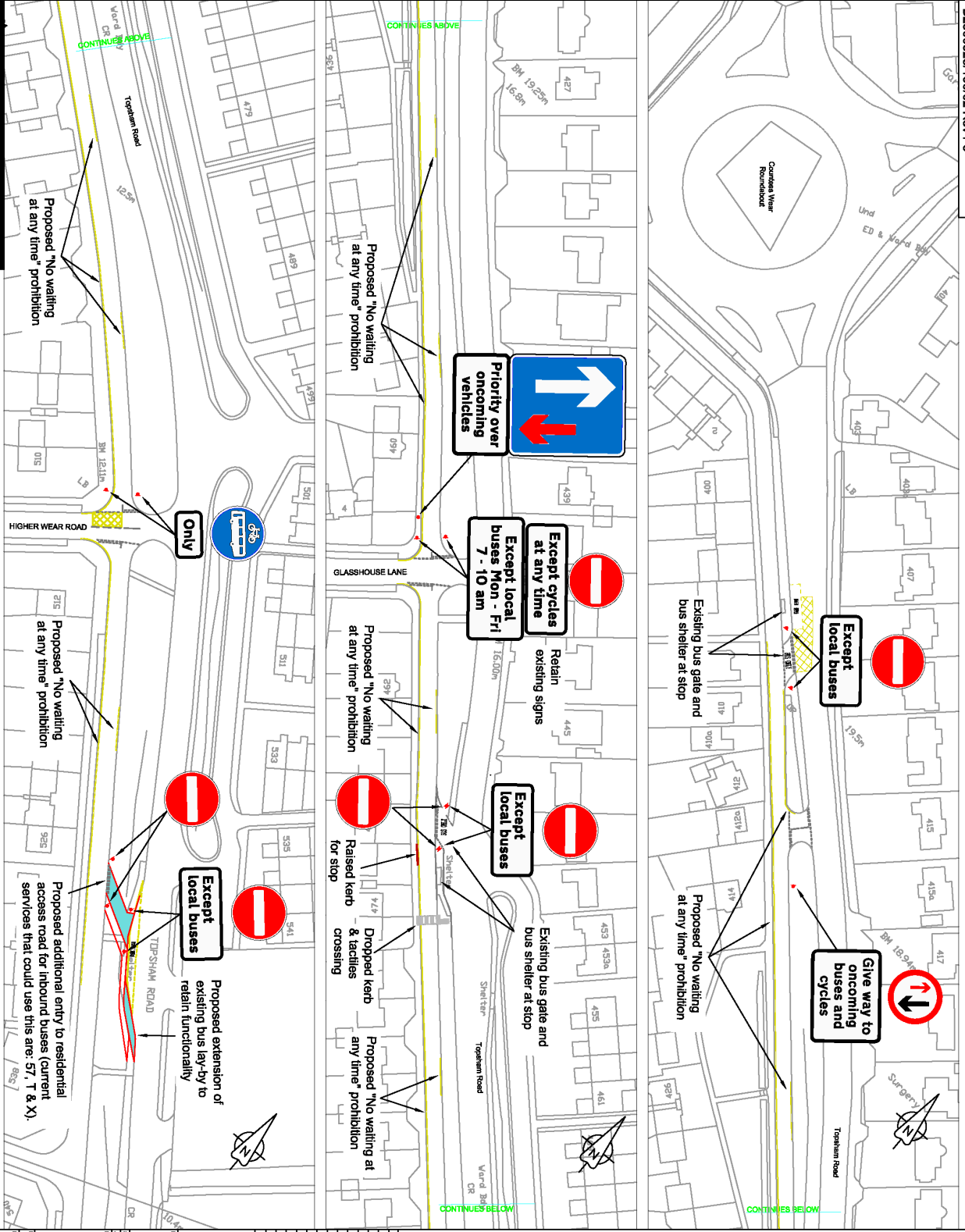
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Background Paper  
None

Date

File Reference



**KEY**

- Area of proposed new carriageway.
- Raised kerb stop.

DATE	REV	REVISION		BY	CHKD	DATE
		NO.	DESCRIPTION			

**DEVON**  
County Council

**JACOBS**  
Engineering & Planning Limited

Topsham Road ( inbound to Courtesee Wear) Bus Priority  
**PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO FACILITIES FOR INBOUND BUSES**

Phase: PRELIMINARY  
 Drawing Number: B2300328/100/02

Scale: NOT TO SCALE  
 Date: 11/08/23  
 Rev: 23/02/23