

## **Queen Street, Exeter, Temporary Social Distancing Measures**

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) the temporary proposals to narrow the vehicle carriageway and restrict westbound access on Queen Street between Northernhay Street and Paul Street and make Iron Bridge one way westbound for vehicles, shown in indicatively in plan 70079415-QS-001 included in Appendix I, are approved at an estimated cost of £75,000; and**
- (b) and the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment be given delegated powers, in consultation with the Chair of HATOC and the local member, to make minor amendments to the scheme details.**

### **1. Introduction**

Queen Street is a busy city centre street providing access to Exeter College, Exeter Central Station, amenities businesses in Queen Street and the city centre.

Concerns have been raised locally that due to high volume of pedestrians there is insufficient space to follow the government's advice on social distancing and that some people no longer feel safe to visit/use Queen Street at certain times of the day.

To address these concerns, temporary proposals to reduce traffic on Queen Street and provide sections of widened footways, that will help enable social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic, have been developed. The reduction of vehicles in the city centre is consistent with the Exeter Transport Strategy 2020-2030 that was approved at DCC Cabinet in November 2020.

Following public consultation on 3 options, a hybrid option that seeks to restrict westbound access between Paul Street and Northernhay Street and make Iron Bridge one way westbound is proposed. If approved, we would look to implement the changes as soon as possible in 2021.

### **2. Transport Data and Access**

Queen Street is a 20mph corridor which serves a high number of different users. Footways from Clocktower roundabout to Northernhay Street are typically around 3.0metres in width, although footway widths on the southern side from Northernhay Street junction to Paul Street junction (80m stretch) are below 2.0 metres.

Traffic surveys undertaken on October 2019, showed two-way 12-hour vehicle flows of 6,000 and peak hour flows of 850 two-way vehicle movements on Queen Street. By comparison, pedestrian flows are 9,000 (two-way) movements over the same period and a high of 1,200 two-way movements an hour during the lunch time period. There are also approximately 700 two-way cycle movements across the day.

There are a number of access requirements which need to be considered with any proposal:

- Queen Street is a key public transport corridor which is used by approximately 8 buses an hour including the Stagecoach H/University service, 359, 360 and 366 bus services. The H service provides a link from Exeter St David's to the University of Exeter, City Centre and the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital and is used by approximately half a million bus users per annum.
- Similarly, Queen Street is used by a number of taxis for interchange at Exeter Central Station and as the main route between Exeter St David's station and the city centre.
- Queen Street is used by Fire service appliances travelling to and from Danes Castle Station.
- Queen Street is the only vehicular access for residents of Northernhay Street.
- On-Street Access for loading and deliveries is also required for a number of businesses on Queen Street.
- East of Paul Street junction, Queen Street South is semi-pedestrianised, with access only permitted for buses, loading and taxis. Queen Street South provides the main servicing route for deliveries to and from a number of premises as well as local taxis.
- Weight restrictions are in place on Iron Bridge, and any changes will need to include suitable measures/signage to prevent the use of St David's Hill by unsuitable vehicles.
- Approximately 1,000 car park spaces are located off of either Queen Street (including Isca Car Park (295 spaces), Exeter Central Station Car Park (70) and Northernhay Street (30)), or Paul Street (Guildhall Car Park (397) and Harlequins Car Park (91)).

### **3. Options**

In order to provide greater social distancing space on Queen Street, three options were consulted on. Common across the options was:

- reducing the carriageway between Northernhay Street to Paul Street to a single lane to enable more space for pedestrians on the narrowest section of footway of Queen Street.

- Temporary signals in vicinity of Northernhay Street and junction of Queen Street/Paul Street to enable two-way bus and cycle flow.
- Single lane section between Northernhay street and Paul Street to be eastbound for vehicles so as to not impact on fire engines heading out from Danes Castle station.

A summary of each of the options is provided below.

#### Option A: One-way eastbound from Northernhay Street to Paul Street only.

This option would maintain two-way vehicle traffic between Clock Tower roundabout and Northernhay Street, whilst addressing the narrowest section of Queen Street.

A number of temporary restrictions would also be required to facilitate the proposed shuttle section including no entry to northbound traffic at the top of Paul Street, straight ahead only from upper Paul Street and left turn only restriction for vehicles exiting Northernhay Street.

#### Option B: Option A + one-way east bound from Clock Tower to Paul Street Only

This option includes all features of option A noted above as well as:

- Queen Street made one way eastbound for all vehicles except bus and cycle.
- Additional widening of the southern footway on sections between the clock tower and Northernhay Street.
- No entry into Richmond Road from clock tower roundabout, providing a wider pedestrian area to cross side arm of the clock tower.

This option would provide greater footway provision for sections of Queen Street, particularly in areas of high footfall. The footway provision would however be inconsistent, of different levels (due to pavement width) and it would require buses to give and take on a number of sections.

Any changes to vehicles access on Queen Street will lead to some traffic redistributing across the network. Iron Bridge/St David's Hill is the clear alternative as the parallel route. However, Iron Bridge has a weight restriction and the signalised junction of Paul Street, North Street, Bartholomew Street West and Iron Bridge also has only limited capacity to accommodate additional vehicle flows.

#### Option C: Option B + Iron Bridge one-way restriction allowing northbound access only

Option C includes the addition of a one-way restriction on Iron Bridge, allowing northbound access only from Paul Street to south of Dinham Road on Iron Bridge.

This would reduce the level of through traffic through St David's. It would also enable more space for pedestrians and cyclist on Iron Bridge and heading into the city centre. However, the restriction would mean any vehicle trips by residents in the area would need to exit via St David's Hill/Hele Road roundabout.

#### **4. Consultations/Representations**

Early engagement with traders and key stakeholders (including Exeter College, Exeter City Council and Stagecoach) was undertaken to ensure their operational considerations are accounted for in the options taken forward to public consultation.

An online public consultation on the “Have Your Say” page provided details and plans of each option, alongside an Office Forms survey to seek feedback from the public. The consultation started on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> November, providing residents and local businesses two weeks to provide feedback on options before the consultation closes on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> December.

A letter was also circulated to 466 residents in the Queen Street and St David’s Hill area, alongside an email to each of the local businesses in the vicinity on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> November to signpost them to the online consultation. The consultation has also been reported in local media.

The consultation is still ongoing but as of Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December we have had 134 responses, of these, 65% were in favour, 25% against and 10% neither. Option C was by far the preferred option, with over 50% putting it as their preferred option.

In the responses received so far, there was recognition that the current layout between Northernhay Street and Paul Street is not suitable for the number of pedestrian users and social distancing. Respondents hoped that pedestrians and cyclists could be given more priority and space on Queen Street not just as a temporary solution, but also in the future.

Those against the proposals expressed concerns with use of resources, the timing of the measures in relation to a potential vaccine and the impact of traffic changes on the network.

28 residents living on in vicinity of St David’s Hill were less supportive of, with only 40% in favour. Concerns included that any temporary changes on Queen Street would exacerbate existing issues with extra traffic on St David’s Hill.

8 traders located on Queen Street provided a response, six of which agreed existing measures on Queen Street are ineffective. 2 local traders didn’t think further changes for COVID-19 were necessary but would welcome changes to improve pedestrian access to their stores.

11 businesses (not located on Queen Street between Clocktower and Paul Street) responded, of these, 7 were in favour and 4 were against.

Taxi operators asked for taxis to also be permitted to travel westbound on Queen Street, enabling access in both direction from Central station and reflecting the access arrangements on the section of Queen Street between Musgrave Row and Paul Street. It was also requested to allow two-way taxis on Iron Bridge under Option C.

## 5. Option Appraisal

The table below gives a summary of the relative merits of each option in terms of supporting social distancing, public responses so far and the impact on key junctions and Iron Bridge. Following consultation feedback, a new option D comprising a hybrid of traffic access on Queen Street as per Option A and one way on St David’s Hill has also been considered.

The traffic impact of different options across the network has been assessed with a spreadsheet model and junction models have been developed to assess the performance of the Paul Street/Queen Street and Paul Street/Iron Bridge junctions.

Scores are on a RAG scale, with green indicates performs well through to red indicates performs poorly.

Options	Social Distancing	Flows on Iron Bridge	Paul St/Iron Bridge junction performance	Public Response
Do Nothing	Red	Green	Green	Yellow
A	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red
B	Green	Yellow	Red	Yellow
C	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green
New Option D (A+C)	Yellow	Green	Green	Green

### RAG Performance of temporary Queen Street/Iron Bridge Options.

Options C and D provide the best balance across the different criteria, with the one way on Iron Bridge mitigating the impact of displaced traffic and being broadly well supported in the consultation.

The one way along all of Queen Street in Option C would enable more space for pedestrians. However, by requiring all traffic on Queen Street into a gyratory it puts more traffic onto St David’s Hill and the proposed “give & take” for westbound buses may lead to delays in initial period before travel patterns settle down after the changes.

Option D improves space for pedestrians, manages access to facilities and maintains access for public service vehicles loading and residents. It provides a flexible starting point that does not preclude further changes once travel patterns have had a chance to settle down after any change. The lower number of barriers required also means it should be implementable and potentially made permanent in a shorter timescale. It reduces the risk of supply chain delays that could arise from a large order of barriers.

The proposed scheme is for a hybrid option comprising Option A for Queen Street plus the addition of the one-way restriction on Iron Bridge as shown in Appendix I. This include the following provisions:

- Section of Queen street between Paul Street and Northernhay Street reduced to single lane width, to enable additional footway capacity on the narrowest section of Queen Street.
- Smallest change in traffic flows on Iron Bridge.

- Taxi and buses will be permitted two-way access on Queen Street.
- Cyclists permitted to travel in both directions on Queen Street and Iron Bridge.
- Additional signage to encourage heavy goods vehicles exiting from Queen Street South to route via Paul Street, North Street, South Street.

Feedback from the Magdalen Road scheme has also shown barrier type in retail streets needs to be attractive and in-fitting with the location. Rather than traditional red/white barriers we are exploring the potential for more attractive alternatives to delineate the additional footway space from the carriageway between Paul Street and Northernhay Street. An update on this will be provided at committee.

## **6. Financial Considerations**

The installation and maintenance of temporary measures on Queen Street are estimated to cost up to £75,000 and would be funded by revenue funding from the Emergency Active Travel Fund tranche 2 allocation.

Proposals for the City Centre on Fore Street and South Street were included in the Active Travel Fund bid. Initial discussions with traders on Fore Street found limited support for significant changes and therefore the proposals for Queen Street are likely to be instead of any changes to Fore Street.

The majority of the cost is from the ongoing maintenance of any temporary measures, and the figure above is based on the estimated cost if measures are retained until after the academic year has finished in Summer.

## **7. Environmental Impact Considerations**

The measures proposed in this report will reduce the volume of vehicles and improve provision for pedestrians on a prominent city centre street. Access for buses and taxis in Queen Street is also retained, ensuring the proposals support sustainable travel options.

The proposed relocation of traffic signals outside the Museum to the west will move queuing vehicles further west towards Central Station. Stationary traffic will therefore form a queue in a more open area where emission have more room to dissipate, instead of being in a canyon between building can occur currently at the signals therefore providing a reduction in the worst levels of pollutants.

The proposed changes will however result in traffic being displaced onto other roads and some journeys being made longer. The change to make Iron Bridge one way will help to mitigate the impact of displaced traffic from Queen Street, although there is still likely to be an increase to two way traffic on the upper end of St David's Hill and other alternative routes such as Bonhay Road. It nevertheless expected that with changes to limit vehicle access, the total traffic on the road network is expected to reduce as a result of the schemes.

Although there may be negative impacts in some locations, the overall environmental impacts arising from the proposals are therefore expected to be positive.

## **8. Equality Considerations**

The Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) undertaken for the recent Emergency Active Travel ‘pop up’ has been considered in the design process for Queen Street. These EIAs concluded that there was an overall benefit in creating a lower traffic environment as it would encourage greater participation and increase the diversity of people participating in active travel. The proposals also seek to retain two-way bus, cycle and taxi access to Queen Street, therefore minimising the impact on those that do not have access to a car.

Some car journeys maybe longer due to changes to vehicle access, although access by car be retained in at least one direction to all locations on Queen Street and St David’s Hill so it is still possible to access by those relying on car.

Therefore, overall, the proposals are expected to advance equality of opportunity. The draft Equality Impact Assessment will be updated to reflect any implemented scheme and published prior to any changes being implemented.

It is recognised that the temporarily widened pedestrian facilities will be on two levels straddling the kerb. To assist those with limited mobility the design will have to provide suitable transitions to and from the lower level. Options to provide the widened pedestrian area on a single level as soon as practically possible will also be investigated.

## **9. Legal Considerations**

The proposed changes would be introduced through Temporary Traffic Regulation notices and/or Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders. The temporary orders do not require a public consultation, although statutory bodies are notified of the restrictions (e.g. emergency services) and a public notice is placed in the local press. The temporary orders remain valid for up to 18 months.

## **10. Risk Management Considerations**

A road safety audit of the proposed scheme has been commissioned, but not yet undertaken. It is expected that the changes will improve road safety, however, if changes are required as a result of the safety audit this can therefore be agreed through delegated powers as per recommendation (b) of this report.

The recommend approach is that beyond the sections of one way, there will only be limited further changes to Queen Street to begin with. This will enable measures to be introduced quicker, but also reduces the risk of having to amend any implemented measures while retaining flexibility for any adjustments to be made in future.

## **11. Public Health Impact**

The scheme will have a positive public health impact by improving facilities for social distancing on a busy pedestrian corridor. Local feedback has already highlighted concern to use Queen Street and the changes to provide additional space at an existing pinch points will help to address this.

Although a vaccine for COVID-19 will start to be rolled out across the UK in the coming months, the government advice remains that social distancing will be required for some time and the proposed scheme supports this.

## **12. Summary/Conclusions/Reasons for Recommendations**

The proposal will reduce through traffic on Queen Street, providing more space for and increasing safety for pedestrians and supports the County Council's encouragement of active travel in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The preferred option provides a balanced approach mitigating impact on St David's Hill, maintain access for sustainable modes and the flexibility to make further changes if required.

Dave Black  
Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

### **Electoral Division: St David's & Haven Banks**

#### Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Contact for enquiries: Will Pratt

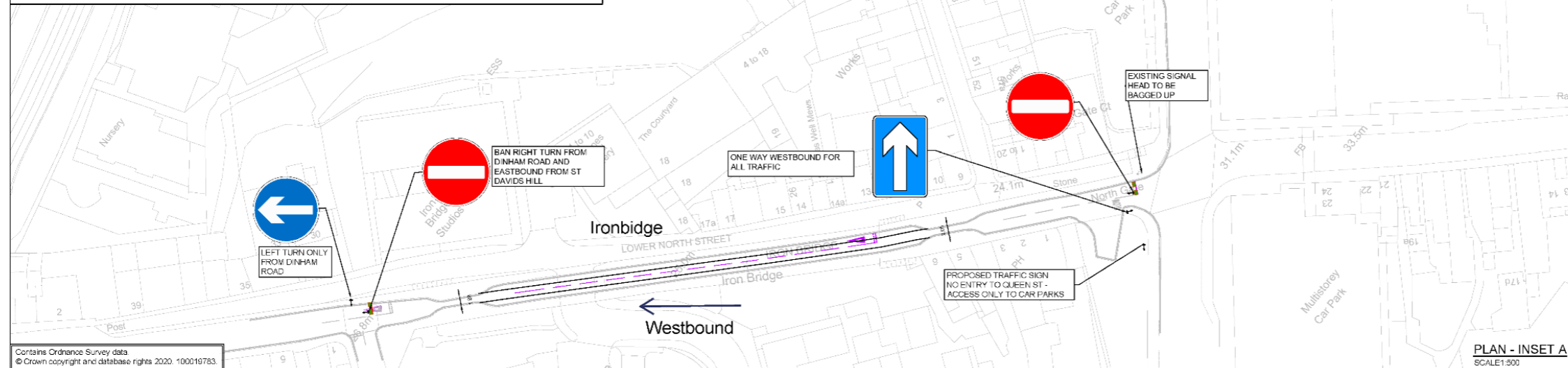
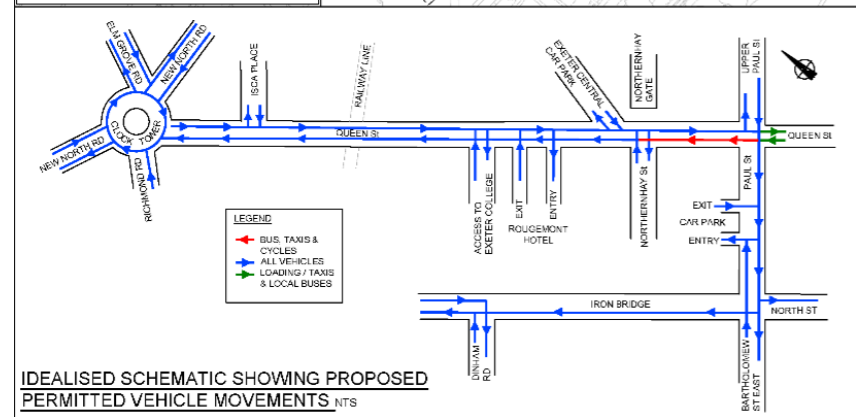
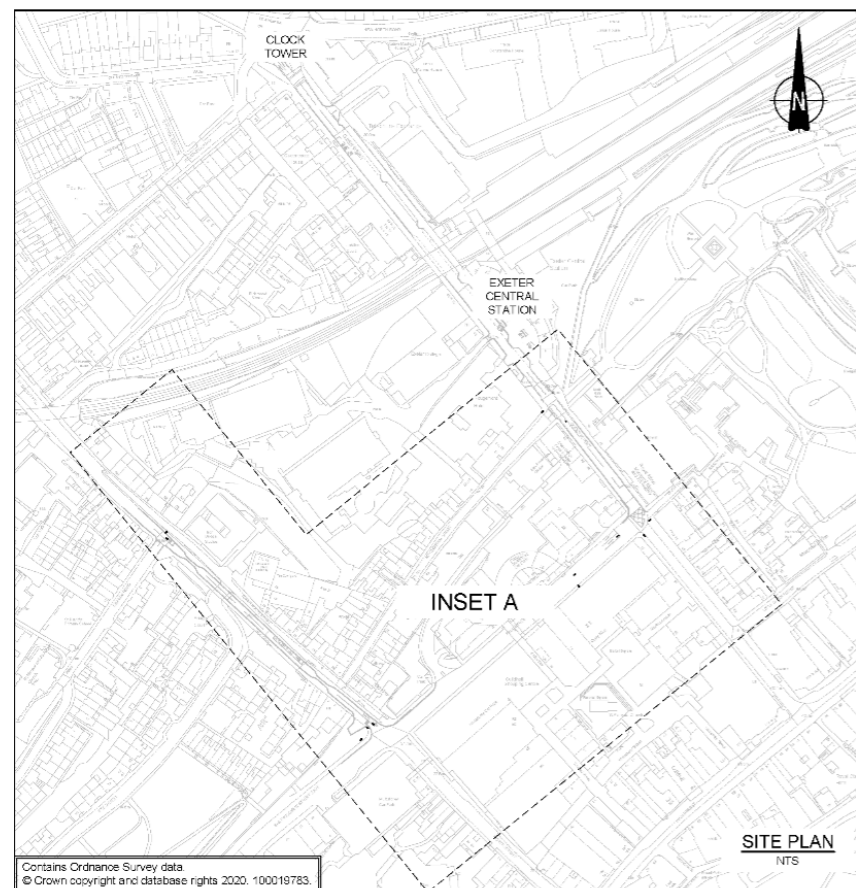
Room No: Matford Offices, County Hall, Exeter

Tel No: 01392-383000

Background Paper	Date	File Reference
None		

wp081220exh  
sc/cr/Queen Street, Exeter, Temporary Social Distancing Measures  
03 081220





**DO NOT SCALE**

**KEY:**

- FOOTWAY SPACE CLAIMED FROM EXISTING CARRIAGEWAY
- PROPOSED PLANTERS (SPECIFICATION TO BE AGREED)
- EXISTING ROADMARKINGS TO BE REMOVED BY THE APPLICATION OF BLACK PAINT
- PROPOSED ROADMARKINGS (SPECIFICATION TO BE AGREED)

**NOTES:**

- DO NOT SCALE FROM THIS DRAWING
- ALL DIMENSIONS ARE IN METRES UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE
- DRAWING TO BE PRINTED IN COLOUR
- THE TEMPORARY TRAFFIC SIGNS SHALL CONFORM WITH TRAFFIC SIGNS MANUAL CHAPTER 8
- ROAD MARKINGS AND TRAFFIC SIGNS SHALL CONFORM WITH THE TRAFFIC SIGNS REGULATIONS AND GENERAL DIRECTIONS 2016
- PROPOSED WIDENED FOOTWAY MUST HAVE A WIDTH OF MINIMUM 750mm
- EXISTING ROUTE SIGNAGE TO BE REVIEWED AND BAGGED/MASKED APPROPRIATELY
- DIMENSIONS MEASURED/TAKEN FROM OS MAPPING AND ARE APPROXIMATE
- PROPOSED ADVANCE AND DIVERSION SIGNAGE NOT SHOWN ON THIS DRAWING

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REV	28/07/2015	TY	07038	000			

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**S2 - FOR INFORMATION**

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C.B.R.

**Devon County Council**

PROJECT: **EATF QUEEN STREET EXETER**

TITLE: **TEMPORARY HIGHWAY LAYOUT**

SCALE @A1	DRAWN	AM	APPROVED	DR
AS SHOWN @A1	SL	SL	SL	DR
PROJECT NO	70079415	DATE	December 20	
DRAWN BY	70079415-QS-001	SCALE		P01

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