

Doctors Walk Walking and Cycling Improvements

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 Traffic Regulation Order to prohibit vehicles on Doctors Walk, at the Ide Village Road end as indicated in Appendix 1, be advertised, and, if no significant objections received, be made and sealed;**
- (b) subject to the outcome of the Traffic Regulation Order consultation the proposals for Doctors Walk and signage changes, shown in Appendix 1 are approved for construction at a total estimated cost of £35,000; and**
- (c) 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.**

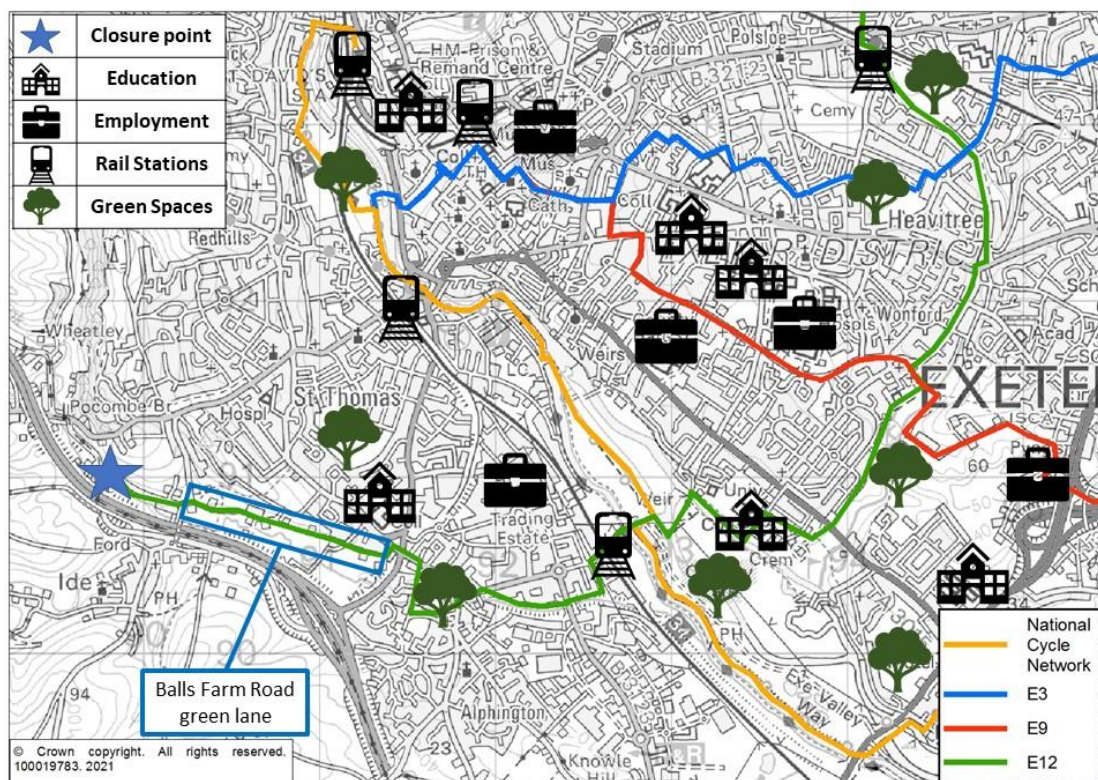
1. Introduction/Background

As part of the Emergency Active Travel Fund measures, the County Council invited communities, including town and parish councils, to suggest proposals that would encourage active travel. As a result, in September 2020 the council delivered a temporary point closure to vehicles on Doctors Walk between the Ide A30 overbridge and West Exe school/Sainsburys/Marsh Barton area.

The change has significantly reduced traffic volumes to create a network of quiet 'green lanes', encompassing Doctors Walk, Balls Farm Road and Little Johns Cross Hill. The change has been generally very well received by the public, with over 80% of initial feedback and subsequent consultation responses in favour of the changes.

The incorporation of "Green Lanes" supporting active travel access from villages on the edge of the city was one of the recommendations from the review of the Exeter Transport Strategy by the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny. A green lane proposal for Balls Farm Road is identified in the 5 year Action Plan of the Cabinet-approved Exeter Transport Strategy 2020-2030.

The changes also link Ide to the proposed E12 north-south cycle route, which continues to Alphington, Marsh Barton Rail Station (under construction), Wonford and Heavitree, offering connections to employment, education, public transport and green spaces, as illustrated below.



2. Proposals

The proposal is to make permanent the temporary changes. A point closure to vehicular traffic is proposed at the Ide Village Road end of Doctors Walk, as illustrated in Appendix 1. Subject to approval, a TRO for this change would be advertised, and, if no significant objections are received, made and sealed.

Subject to the outcome of the TRO consultation, the proposal includes physical works to install a permanent barrier at the point of closure, as shown in Appendix 1. Following liaison with the highway neighbourhood team, removable bollards are being recommended so that maintenance works access could occasionally be provided.

Changes to signage and road markings are also proposed, to make road users aware of the restrictions and provide suitable alternative signage to the Twisted Oak pub.

3. Consultations/Representations

Following the initial implementation of the temporary closure, approximately 50 representations were received from members of the public. Over 80% of correspondence stated support for the temporary changes.

A consultation letter was sent to local residents and stakeholders in Autumn 2021 asking if they would like to see the temporary change made permanent. 46 representations were received, with over 80% again in favour of making the

temporary changes permanent, as summarised below. Among respondents who identified themselves as residents of both Balls Farm Road and Little Johns Cross Hill, the roads neighbouring the scheme, there were significant majorities in favour of the changes.

	All Respondents		Balls Farm Road residents		Little Johns Cross Hill residents	
Overall Comment	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Support	38	83%	4	100%	17	81%
Oppose	6	13%	0	0%	3	14%
Not Stated	2	4%	0	0%	1	5%
Responses	46	100%	4	100%	21	100%

Representations were also received from Ide Parish Council supporting making the changes permanent, and highlighting the benefits for residents of Ide of quieter routes to/from the A30 foot/cycle bridge. The DCC member for Exminster & Haldon, which contains Ide, responded that the trial has been successful and has enabled people to walk/cycle.

Reasons given for supporting the changes included that the changes have reduced traffic volumes; improved road safety and encouraged greater levels of walking and cycling, particularly for walking for leisure and journeys to/from schools. Reasons against included the perception that the changes had displaced traffic onto other roads; given rise to anti-social behaviour at the turning head and caused issues at the junction of the B3212 Pocombe Hill and Ide Village Road.

A number of representations also included suggestions for making improvements to a permanent scheme. These are detailed along with the County Council's response in Appendix 2, and where appropriate have been accommodated in the final scheme design.

4. Transport Data

Traffic and pedestrian counts before and after the trial have been undertaken at the Balls Farm Road/Little Johns Cross Hill junction in September 2019 and April 2021.

These show that there has been an over 50% reduction in vehicular traffic and an over 50% increase in walking and cycling levels following the changes. Consequently, whereas previously traffic volumes exceeded walking and cycling levels by a ratio of approximately 3:1, walking and cycling levels exceeded traffic volumes at the most recent count. This data is summarised below:

Total 12 Hour (07:00-19:00) Flow	Sept 2019	April 2021	Change
Vehicular Traffic	795	371	-53%
Pedestrians & Cycles	273	445	+63%

The changes by junction arm were as follows:

- Little Johns Cross Hill – vehicles down 44%, pedestrians/cycles up 97%
- Balls Farm Road East – vehicles down 68%, pedestrians/cycles up 54%
- Balls Farm Road West – vehicles down 56%, pedestrians/cycles up 54%

5. Options

Alternative options include:

- Removing the closure and reopening the road to all traffic
- Relocating the closure point
- Implementing alternative measures to reduce traffic volumes, e.g. chicanes or speed humps

Reopening the road to all traffic would reverse the benefits delivered by the temporary measures, by increasing traffic volumes and making routes less attractive to pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. This would slow progress towards active travel targets and carbon reduction commitments and would be contrary to the preferences expressed by residents in the public consultation (described above).

Relocating the closure point could improve access to certain properties from certain directions. However, as users have become used to the changes this could be disruptive as it is likely many road users have now adjusted to the changes.

A closure point could be provided on Balls Farm Road East, which would be even more effective at reducing through traffic on Balls Farm Road. However, to avoid the risk of vehicles having to reverse over long distances, a turning head would be required, and enable access for agricultural users. This is not being pursued.

Implementing alternative measures, such as chicanes or speed bumps, would also enable vehicular traffic to take more direct routes, whilst to some extent deterring through traffic. However, experience elsewhere suggests this approach would be less effective in reducing traffic volumes and less effective in encouraging walking and cycling. It may also increase noise for local residents. This approach would be more expensive and less effective at improving facilities for active travel than the preferred option.

Delivering a permanent closure at the location of the temporary closure is considered the option most in line with the County Council's objectives related to active travel and carbon reduction, and is supported by a significant majority of consultation respondents.

6. Financial Considerations

It is estimated that the construction works on Doctors Walk would cost up to £35,000, which would be funded by:

- £4,625 from Matford Green S106
- £30,375 from tranche 2 of the Active Travel Fund

7. Legal Considerations

The statutory consultation on the proposed vehicle prohibition will be carried out in line with the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.

When making a Traffic Regulation Order it is the County Council 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 traffic and provision of parking facilities. This includes provisions for pedestrians and cyclists.

The temporary traffic order for Doctors Walk would have originally expired in March, but a 6 month extension until September 2022 has been granted by the Department for Transport.

8. Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change)

The measures proposed in this report will improve walking and cycling, encouraging reduced car use and boosting people's health and fitness.

There may be a slight negative impact, due to some journeys being made longer, although it is expected that some people will choose to switch modes rather than simply changing their driving route. This is supported by the data showing increased walking and cycling numbers as a result of the scheme.

The environmental impacts arising from the proposals are therefore expected to be positive.

9. Equality Considerations

The proposals help enable pedestrians and cyclists of a wide range of abilities and confidence levels to more safely travel along the roads impacted. All properties are still accessible by motor vehicles.

An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken for the temporary modal filters across Exeter and concluded that there was an overall benefit in creating a low traffic, safer environment for walking and cycling, which would encourage greater participation in cycling/physical activity amongst young people, older people, women and people with disabilities.

10. Risk Management Considerations

As discussed in section 7, multiple elements of the scheme include legal considerations and consultations. The progression of the scheme to construction will be subject to the approval of the statutory and public consultations.

The pop-up measures benefit from having been trialled so that a decision to progress is based on the actual, rather than predicted impacts of a scheme, therefore reducing potential unforeseen risks. All of the temporary measures were audited prior to their installation, and a safety audit of the final scheme will be undertaken before any works are implemented.

11. Public Health Impact

The proposals improve the pedestrian and cycling environment and encourage sustainable travel, increasing physical activity levels, reducing carbon emissions and contributing positively to peoples' general health and wellbeing.

12. Reasons for Recommendations

The temporary scheme has been successful in increasing active travel and has been well received, with strong support for making it permanent.

The proposal is identified in the adopted Exeter Transport Strategy and helps provide safer access for pedestrians and cyclists from Ide and the local area to access employment and education destinations, therefore supporting safe, sustainable and healthy travel.

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Electoral Division: Alphington & Cowick

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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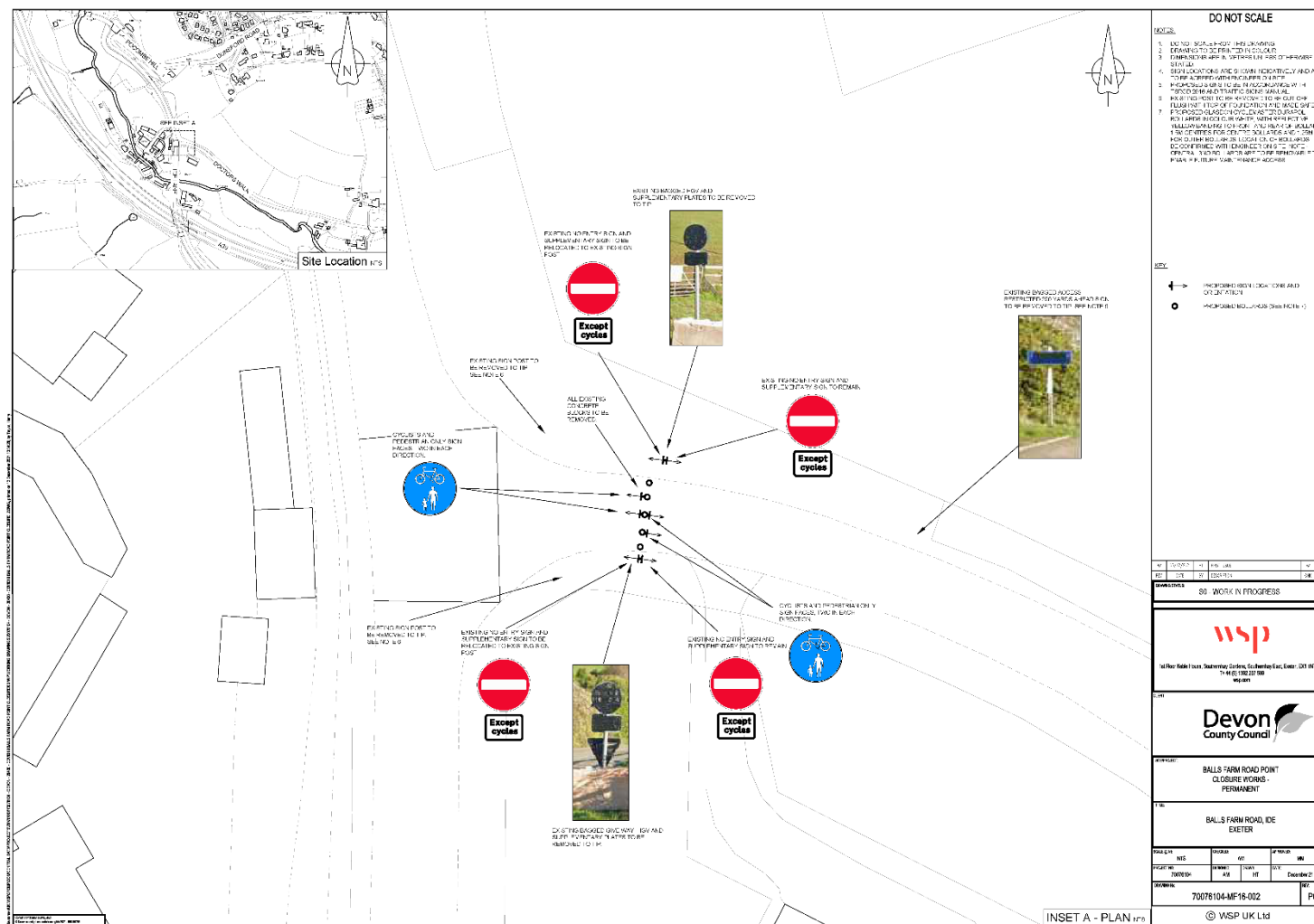
Room No: Matford Offices, County Hall, Exeter

Tel No: 01392 383000

Background Paper	Date	File Ref.
None		

wp171221exh
sc/cr/Doctors Walk
02 070122

Proposed Scheme



Summary of Suggestions Received for Improving Permanent Scheme

Suggestion	Response
Respondent 1: Resident of Balls Farm Road	
There is still a problem with vehicles coming from Cowick Lane/Crabb Lane in the afternoon using Balls Farm Road/Little Johns Cross Hill as a rat run to beat the congestion at Cowick Lane/Dunsford Road/Cowick Street lights. Could Balls Farm Road be made a no entry westward say from 3.00-6.00 to help combat this?	The April 2021 traffic count recorded 9 vehicles making this turning movement during the specified 3-hour period. Balls Farm Road is already subject to a restriction on access which the police can enforce. Therefore, further changes to mitigate this issue are not considered proportionate at this time.
Respondent 2: Resident of Little Johns Cross Hill	
We would go further in making additional measures to make Balls Farm road safer for pedestrians and riders by limiting through traffic by measures at the end points.	As detailed above, the temporary changes have significantly reduced vehicular flows on Doctors Walk, Balls Farm Road and Little Johns Cross Hill, to the extent that pedestrian/cycle flows now exceed vehicular flows. Although further changes are feasible, they are not considered proportionate at this time.
Respondent 3: Resident of Little Johns Cross Hill	
Enforcement of the restriction onto Little John's Cross Hill would also help to further restrict through traffic.	Noted.
Respondent 4: Resident of Little Johns Cross Hill	
Please look at the Ide Lane/Dunsford Road intersection and see if it could be improved, possibly even installing traffic lights.	Even in the unlikely situation that all the traffic removed from the Balls Farm Road/Little Johns Cross Hill junction transferred to the Pocombe Bridge junction, the change in total flows at Pocombe Bridge would be less than 5%. Additionally, our collision Map shows no collisions at this location in the 5-year period 2016-2020. Given the significant increase in budget which would be required to deliver this change, it is not considered proportionate to include this in the scheme.
Respondent 5: Owner of business based at Pocombe Bridge	
Pocombe Bridge to Alphington Road (Ide Village Road) needs to be reduced from the national speed limit to 30mph.	Due to the nature of the road, this would not be appropriate or comply with the Council's policy.

Suggestion	Response
The termination needs to be a solid barrier, as it is now, not an access only order, which was previously ineffective.	As shown in Appendix 1, the permanent closure will take the form of a physical barrier.
The temporary signage at the Twisted Oak was gone within weeks. The permanent signage of a 'no through road' needs to be more obvious, perhaps with some width reduction engineering.	As noted above, changes to signage and road markings are proposed, to make road users aware of the restrictions.
Respondent 6: Resident of Pocombe Bridge	
The pavements [on Ide Village Road] are in a poor state overgrown with grass making them even narrower and hedges overhanging making it near impossible to ride a bike along.	Noted and passed onto Neighbourhood Highway Team.
Ide Village Road requires improvement (like a roundabout) at the end by Pocombe Bridge as the traffic builds up going back towards the village entrance on rush hour times.	Given the significant increase in budget which would be required to deliver this change, it is not considered proportionate to include this in the scheme.
Respondent 7: Resident of Little Johns Cross Hill	
Our only other concern is the speed that vehicles travel up and down the hill. It's only a matter of time before there is an accident, could this be somehow be addressed?	Given the relatively low flows and that these have reduced since the change, speed control not considered appropriate.
Respondent 8: Resident of Little Johns Cross Hill	
There are still a few drivers who use the road and still treat it like Brand's Hatch!! Speed humps would help!	Given the relatively low flows and that these have reduced since the change, speed control not considered appropriate.
Respondent 9: Resident of Little Johns Cross Hill	
With the increased pedestrian and cycling activity on Balls Farm Road it would be good to have a stricter regime for hedge trimming, until today the pedestrians had to leap into the nettles to avoid passing vehicles. I think it would warrant two cuts a year.	Noted and passed onto Neighbourhood Highway Team.
Visibility at the Pocombe Bridge junction is not good to the west, there is a tree or bushes on the private land which restricts visibility. You have to swivel your eyes through more than 180 degrees. Has there been any change to the accident/incident rate? The queue	Even in the unlikely situation that all the traffic removed from the Balls Farm Road/Little Johns Cross Hill junction transferred to the Pocombe Bridge junction, the change in total flows at Pocombe Bridge would be less than 5%. Additionally, our collision Map shows no collisions at this location in the 5-year

Suggestion	Response
has been regularly reported as approaching the Ide junction at times, would traffic signals help?	period 2016-2020. Given the significant increase in budget which would be required to deliver this change, it is not considered proportionate to include this in the scheme.
Parking in the stub end of Doctors Walk sometimes restricts cycle access.	Noted. No changes/restrictions proposed as part of this scheme, but could be reconsidered in future.
Respondent 10: Resident of Little Johns Cross Hill	
[The Pocombe Bridge] junction is dangerous as there is very limited visibility when you're looking to your left hand side. It would benefit from the vegetation been lowered so you have a little bit more view around that corner.	Noted. Collision data suggest no underlying issue at this junction.
Occasionally we do need to use Balls Farm Lane but it is extensively overgrown and that really needs to be more regularly maintained.	Noted and passed onto Neighbourhood Highway Team.
On the Ide side of the closure we have noticed that cars are regularly parking on the "hammerhead" that has been created and you often see vehicles there that are up for sale.	Noted. No changes/restrictions proposed as part of this scheme, but could be reconsidered in future.