

Queen Street, Newton Abbot Pedestrian Enhancements Public Consultation

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) **A public consultation is undertaken on detailed elements of a pedestrian and public realm enhancement scheme on Queen Street, Newton Abbot, between Courtenay Street and Newton Abbot Rail Station, containing the following key proposals:**
 - (i) **Widened footways, improved crossing provision at side roads and across Queen Street/Station Road;**
 - (ii) **Significant reduction of on-street parking and changes to loading provision;**
 - (iii) **Restricted access to general traffic on Queen Street, west of Albany Street, including no vehicular access between King Street and Queen Street and one-way vehicular access on Hopkins Lane;**
 - (iv) **Restricted access to general traffic at the southern end of Lemon Road, two-way cycles permitted;**
 - (v) **20mph speed limit for Queen Street west of The Avenue;**
 - (vi) **Enhanced greening and seating where possible;**
 - (vii) **Improved public transport and cycle route provision; and**
- (b) **the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment be given delegated powers, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highway Management, Chair of HATOC and the local member, to make minor amendments to the scheme details.**

1. Introduction/Background

This report sets out a package of proposals for pedestrian and public realm enhancements along Queen Street, Newton Abbot. These proposals are recommended to progress to public consultation. Figure 1 below shows the corridor identified for improvement.

Queen Street, Newton Abbot connects Newton Abbot Rail Station to the Town Centre and is home to an extensive number of shops, independent businesses and services. However, the corridor is dominated by motorised vehicles with a significant amount of space allocated to through traffic and on-street parking. This arrangement means that footways are narrow in places and the street, and its side roads, can be difficult to cross. Overall, not enough space is allocated to pedestrians who are the priority in a Town Centre area.

A package of proposals for public consultation have been designed to make Queen Street a more attractive, safe and healthy place for shoppers and businesses. Proposals aim to make everyone feel safe and welcome, with more space for pedestrians to enjoy and access shops and services, improved accessibility, cleaner air and less noise pollution.

The exact specification of proposals is currently under development, however, interventions centre on widened footways, improved crossing provision at side roads and across Queen Street/Station Road. Transforming the environment for shoppers will be achieved through a significant reduction of on-street parking, alongside the removal of general traffic by changes to access. Where possible, enhanced greening and seating is also proposed.

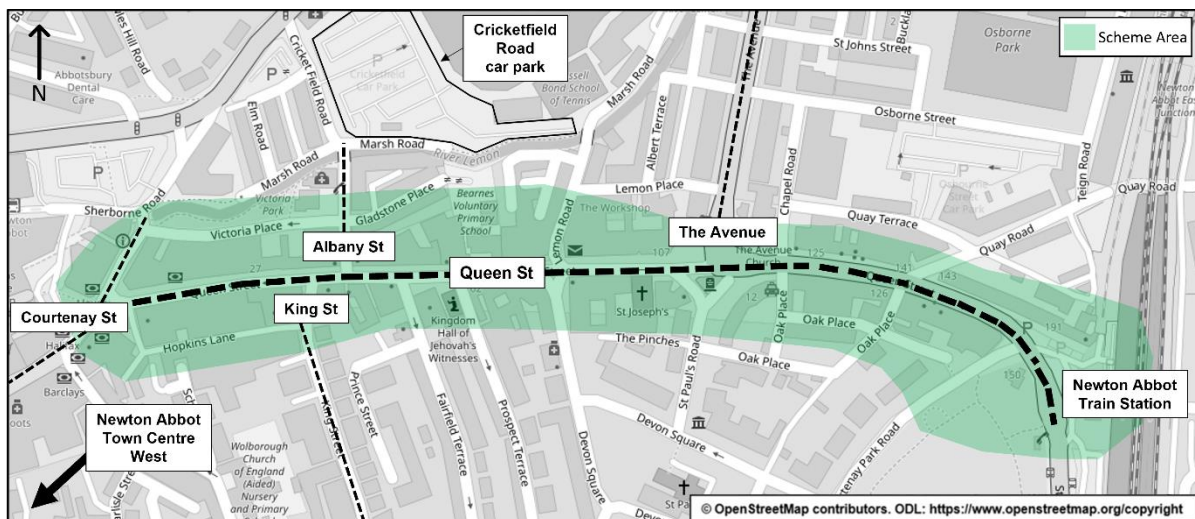


Figure 1: Scheme Area and Geography

The scheme is proposed to be delivered through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' Future High Street Fund (FHSF). Teignbridge District Council (TDC) secured funding in May 2021. As the highway authority, Devon County Council (DCC) supported the bid to government and is helping to enable the walking and cycling elements of the funding package to be realised. These proposals form part of those elements.

2. Proposals

It is proposed to take a package of proposals for pedestrian and public realm enhancements along Queen Street, Newton Abbot, to public consultation. The key interventions set out in the report recommendation are expanded on below. However, it should be noted that the exact specification of proposals is still under development, utilising feedback from the prior public consultation and from internal and external stakeholder sessions, and will be agreed with the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment prior to any consultation.

Starred (*) proposals indicate that the given intervention is earmarked to be delivered through the Active Travel Fund (ATF), rather than the FHSF package. ATF proposals are derived from the emerging Heart of Teignbridge Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). ATF funding is yet to be announced, however,

it is considered prudent to include ATF proposals in the Queen Street public consultation given their complementary nature with the FHSF package. If the ATF funding is not forthcoming from the Department for Transport, then these elements of the project will be postponed and await funding from alternative sources in the future.

Pedestrian and Public Realm Interventions

- **Footways** – Widened footways, particularly at the scheme’s western end, between Albany Street and Courtenay Street, will give shoppers more space to move and access shops and services. Increased footway width will also improve access for mobility scooters, buggies etc.
- **Crossings** – Improved crossing provision at side roads, alongside narrowed junction mouths, will make junctions safer and easier to cross, with priority given to pedestrians instead of motor vehicles. Safer crossing opportunities will also be provided across Queen Street/Station Road; a new zebra crossing immediately west of the War Memorial, a new zebra crossing between Chapel Road and Quay Road, and an upgraded parallel crossing opposite the Rail Station.
- **Greening & Street Furniture** – Where possible, enhanced greening will be delivered alongside new seating and cycle parking. This will contribute towards making the corridor a more appealing shopping destination and increase dwell time, through visual benefits, shade provision on warmer days, and the potential for localised storm-water run-off and carbon storage benefits.
- **Public Transport** – Reductions in general traffic will help to reduce bus journey times and a new offline bus cage is proposed outside St Joseph’s Catholic Church, improving the quality of the existing un-marked stop.
- **Cycle Provision** – A reduction in general traffic and the provision of new cycle parking will make accessing Queen Street on bike more attractive. Whilst cycles movement will remain westbound only from The Avenue, north/south movements will be enhanced through the removal of traffic to/from King Street and at the southern end of Lemon Road (*). A shared use path alongside the War Memorial, which leads to a new quiet route along Oak Place to Courtenay Park, is also proposed (*), in addition to a widened shared use path from Station Road through to Courtenay Park Road via the eastern edge of Courtenay Park. National Cycle Network improvements via Newton Abbot (on the northern edge of the town centre), are being delivered via a separate but related scheme, and will enhance the legibility and junction safety along this important cycling and walking route.

Changes for Motorised Vehicles

- **Parking & Loading** – To enable transformative pedestrian and public realm improvements, it is proposed to remove approximately 50% of on-street parking spaces, all on-street parking west of Albany Street to Courtenay Street will be removed. However, disabled on-street parking provision in the area will increase, with some places being relocated nearby. Loading bay provision will also increase.

- **Traffic Removal** – Removal of general traffic from the corridor is central to achieving transformation uplift for pedestrians and the public realm. It is proposed to restrict access on Queen Street, west of Albany Street, to buses, taxis, cycles and restricted hours loading. 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. There will be no vehicular access between King Street and Queen Street and one-way vehicular access on Hopkins Lane. The southern end of Lemon Road will be restricted to northbound access only, with two-way cycle movements permitted (*). A summary of these changes is provided in Figure 2 below.
- **Speed Limit** – A new 20mph speed limit is also proposed between The Avenue and Courtenay Street, this will further enhance the environment for shoppers and enhance safety for Bearnas Voluntary Primary School.

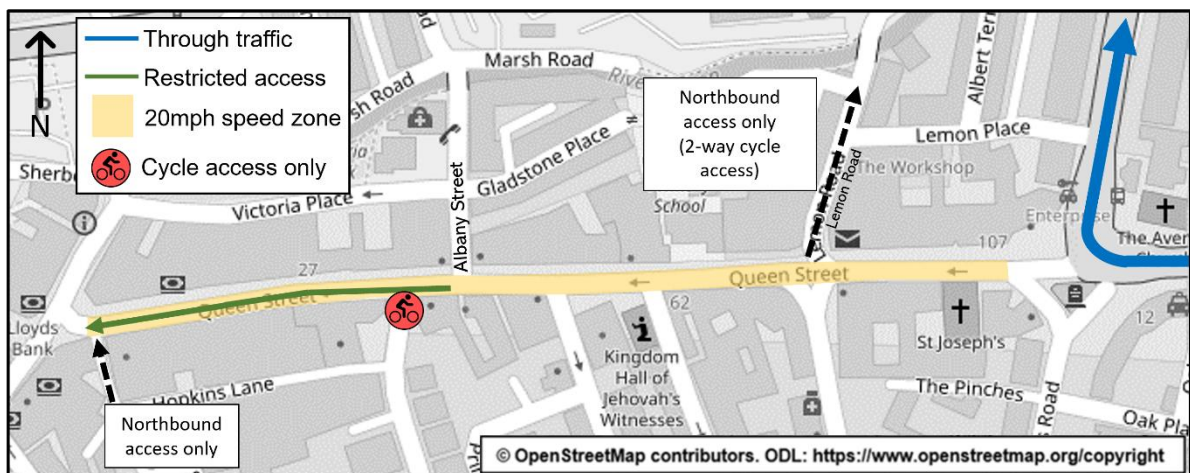


Figure 2: Traffic Removal and Access Changes

Public Consultation

It is recommended that the proposals go to a second public consultation, focusing on Queen Street, in Spring 2022. TDC have already consulted the public in June 2020, in preparation for submitting a proposal to Government in July 2020 (details of this may be found below). This consultation provided a platform to agree the principles of the package, however, a further consultation is required to provide opportunity for local shoppers, businesses and residents to feedback on the detail of the proposals. Given the transformative nature of the proposals, which have been shaped by public and stakeholder feedback to-date, HATOC approval is sought to enable DCC Officers (in collaboration with TDC colleagues) to continue scheme development and seek public feedback.

The proposed public consultation is anticipated to include the following elements:

- **Design Plans** – General arrangement design plans; Traffic Regulation Orders plans detailing changes to access and parking/loading; artist illustration. The plans will be in an easily digestible format, to ensure that they are not

unnecessarily technical and do not form a barrier to participation in the consultation.

- **Transport Assessment** – Technical Note detailing the impacts of motorised vehicle access changes on the surrounding transport network.
- **Focused Consultation** – Local resident/shopper questionnaire; business questionnaire; Have Your Say website; local business update leaflet to be issued prior to the start of the public consultation.
- **Exhibition** – Webinars for local stakeholders, the public and local businesses; fixed window display on Queen Street.
- **Advertising** – Adverts in the local press; posters in community hubs; social media advert; press releases; letter drop; stakeholder email update.

All consultation materials will be agreed with the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment prior to publishing. Participation in the local consultation will also be promoted by Teignbridge District Council and the Town Council.

3. Options/Alternatives

Do Nothing – To keep the status quo would be to maintain motorised vehicle dominance within Newton Abbot Town Centre, to the detriment of creating an environment in which shoppers and visitors can access Queen Street via sustainable transport more easily and comfortably, and spend more time enjoying the area's shops and services. This option would also risk the delivery of the wider FHSF package, which may result in Newton Abbot Town Centre not receiving substantial Government investment at this time and could also damage potential for securing funding for schemes in the future.

Scaled back scheme – As noted above, a collection of proposals recommended for public consultation are earmarked to be delivered through Active Travel Fund (ATF) package. This could be complimented by other scaled back traffic management/parking measures to improve facilities for pedestrians/shoppers in Queen Street. A scaled back option would instead be presented for consultation. This option would also risk the delivery of the wider FHSF package, which may result in Newton Abbot Town Centre not receiving substantial Government investment at this time and is also reliant on the ATF which has not been announced yet.

4. Consultations

A significant amount of consultation has already been undertaken on the proposals to deliver pedestrian and public realm enhancements to Queen Street, Newton Abbot. Consultation to date is summarised below.

Teignbridge District Council Public Consultation (June 2020)

TDC consulted the public in June 2020, in preparation for submitting a proposal to Government in July 2020. Designs contained many of the scheme proposals detailed above, including widened footways and a significant reduction of on-street parking. Plans also included a proposal to deck the Cricketfield car park to the north of Queen Street to offset the loss in on-street parking.

The outcome of this public consultation provided a platform to agree the principles of the scheme. Full details of public feedback may be found at <https://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/community-and-people/major-projects-and-regeneration/future-high-street-fund/queen-street-pedestrian-and-access-proposals-feedback/>.

In summary, the majority of the public supported the principles of the scheme, to enhance the pedestrian environment, and stated they would visit the town centre more often and/or stay longer if the proposals were realised. A smaller number of businesses responded and feedback was mixed; a majority supported pedestrian enhancements, however, there were concerns over the reallocation of on-street parking.

The feedback from this first-stage public consultation has been used to develop existing proposals. It should be noted that due to the FHSF being oversubscribed, proposals were scaled back to remove the additional parking at Cricketfield car park, which would not have been transformative and because there is adequate car parking provision across the town centre. This second public consultation forms a core part of the project plan and will be focused on the details of design in Queen Street.

Stakeholder Consultation (December 2021/January 2022).

In partnership with TDC, and with the agreement of the Local Member, Devon County Council have undertaken additional stakeholder consultation since becoming involved in the project. These include meetings and/or workshops with internal officers from a wide range of disciplines and services, TDC members, representatives from Newton Abbot Town Council (NATC) and a local stakeholder group. There are also recurring meetings with NATC to ensure they are up-to-date and to incorporate feedback.

5. Financial Considerations

The total estimated scheme budget is £967,000. The vast majority of funding will be realised through the Government's FHSF grant, this allocation is expected to be £685k. TDC have also allocated £81k to the scheme. TDC have funded this year's design costs.

Additional funding may be contributed towards the greening and seating elements of the scheme, with sources to be confirmed.

DCC have committed to contributing £200,000 Local Transport Plan (LTP) to the walking and cycling elements of the FHSF package, as set out in the Transport Capital Programme update approved by Cabinet in September 2021. This contribution is not exclusively linked to Queen Street improvements and may be used as contribution towards other transport elements of the FHSF delivery.

There currently exists no funding mechanism for the ATF elements of the proposals, as detailed above. These elements will not be progressed unless an appropriate mechanism is secured. The public consultation does not commit DCC to any contributions for these elements.

Scheme design and development is currently being undertaken by DCC's framework consultants. DCC, as the Highway Authority, will procure and deliver the scheme. This arrangement is subject to a funding agreement between DCC and TDC, which is close to being finalised. No further expenditure will be committed until this has been signed.

It should be noted that FHSF Government allocation for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial year is indicative and will be subject to the outcome of a Government spending review.

6. Legal Considerations

The necessary Traffic Regulation Orders to amend on-street parking/loading, restrict general vehicle access as detailed above and deliver a complimentary scheme signage strategy will need to be progressed after the outcome of the proposed public consultation. Legal advice is currently being sought on the deliverability of changes to access so to minimise the risk of public challenge to DCC.

Enhanced greening is expected to be maintained by Newton Abbot Town Council, however, this arrangement will be subject to their formal agreement of any proposals and, where necessary, an appropriate maintenance agreement.

To facilitate a shared use path through Courtenay Park, a TDC bylaw will need to be replaced to permit cycling on this proposed, dedicated provision in the park. Public consultation on the bylaw changes will sit alongside this proposed consultation.

7. Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change)

The proposals set out in this report will improve walking and cycling provision for shoppers and residents accessing Queen Street, encouraging reduced car use and boosting people's health and physical activity. 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.

Overall, it is expected that the reallocation of road space from vehicles to active travel users is expected to have a positive environmental impact. 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.

8. Equality Considerations

Where relevant to the 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.

taking account of age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), gender and gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women/new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage/civil partnership status in coming to a decision, 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 has been published at: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/impact/>.

9. Risk Management Considerations

The exact specification of proposals is under development and will be subject to a TDC budgetary review in light of a scheme cost estimate.

The FHSF Government grant allocation must be spent by the end of March 2024, this is considered an achievable but ambitious delivery timescale. The approval of a public consultation is key to enabling the project programme to remain on-track.

A stage 1 road safety audit will be carried out prior to proposals being presented for consultation.

10. Summary/Conclusions/Reasons for Recommendations

The approval of the recommendation to progress proposals to transform the public realm and pedestrian provision on Queen Street, Newton Abbot, to the next stage of public consultation is critical to gathering feedback on the specific changes that are proposed.

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Electoral Division: Newton Abbot North

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Reference
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Nil

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