

Impact Assessment



Assessment of: New North Road Bus Gate BSIP Scheme

Service: Climate Change, Environment and Transport

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1. Description of project / service / activity / policy under review

The Exeter Northern Corridor Intervention also known as the New North Road to city centre bus gate creates a bus route link from New North Road to Sidwell Street in Exeter. The scheme is part of a package of bus service improvement schemes outlined in Devon County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). This document is required by the UK Governments' National Bus Strategy, which provided a pathway to help improve bus services following the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Proposal, aims and objectives, and reason for change or review

The bus gate will create a more direct route to the city centre, and subsequently the Exeter Bus Station, for buses travelling along Exeter's Northern Corridor. The proposed bus gate and bus lane will facilitate direct access for buses from New North Road onto Sidwell Street, thus rerouting buses from the existing circular route along Longbrook Street, York Road, and Bampfylde Street. This new route is approximately 0.5km shorter than the existing route and would achieve a journey time saving of 2.5 minutes. The proposed route will also redirect buses away from residential properties and community hubs to reduce congestion, air pollution, and improve road safety in the area.

The proposals are in line with the BSIP's aims of improving bus services and attracting more people to use buses.

3. Risk assessment, limitations and options explored (summary)

Road Safety Audit

A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit (RSA) was undertaken, which highlighted concerns over swept-paths around the junctions adjacent to the bus lane and bus gate. It was underlined that articulated vehicles turning left onto Bailey Street from New North Road could overrun the advance cycle stop line and adjacent stop line on the Bailey Street approach to the

junction. Although it was agreed that the space is tight for an articulated lorry, the scheme does not propose changing the existing alignment of the west kerb line. Due to very low traffic nature of Bailey Street, likely very low speed of a vehicle wishing to turn, and that there is no evidence of safety issues, it is considered that the current is working acceptably. Moving the kerb line on the radius between Bailey Street and New North Road would require significant work to relocate the traffic signal equipment and signalised crossing.

Arboricultural Report

An arboricultural report was undertaken due to the need to raise the canopies of three trees along the eastern footway to facilitate the height of double decker buses. The report advised that the tree canopies should be pruned through a phased approach over a number of years to minimise the physiological and aesthetical impact on the trees. An Arboricultural Method Statement and a Tree Protection Plan would also be required to ensure protection of the trees during the construction phase of the project.

Limitations

A limitation of the scheme is that it reduces the number of buses serving the bus stops on Longbrook Street and York Road, however this issue was not significantly challenged at consultation and nearby alternative stops will still be available such as stops on New North Road, Exeter Bus Station, and the potential for services to stop on Sidwell Street.

Options

Alternative options explored included narrowing the western footway to facilitate width for a traffic lane, contraflow bus lane and retain the existing contraflow cycle lane. This option was not taken forward due to a longer crossing distance for pedestrians and the need to move the existing pedestrian crossing and signals on Bailey Street to accommodate turning vehicles as well as an increased cost over the preferred option that was taken forward.

Alternatively, nothing could be done going forward. Maintaining the existing situation would continue to provide services with unnecessarily long journey times, with indirect routes being followed. Maintaining current service will do nothing to improve patronage, and therefore fail to meet the aim of the BSIP.

4. People affected, diversity profile and analysis of needs

The people potentially affected by the proposals are principally people living or working in the Exeter area, as well as some bus passengers will be travelling in and out of Exeter to other parts of Devon. Therefore, the diversity profile for Exeter, and Devon as a whole is presented below with England overall used as a comparator. The propensity for certain

demographic groups to use buses is also discussed, to inform assessment of the potential differential impacts of the proposals.

Age

Table 1 illustrates that the population of Exeter is slightly younger than that national average with the population of 0-64 year olds 2% lower than England as a whole. However, Devon as a whole is comparatively older than the national average. 65 years olds and over make up 8% larger proportion of the county's population than the national average.

Geography	Total	% Age 0-19	% Age 20-64	% Age 65+
Exeter	130,712	23%	60%	17%
Devon	811,638	20%	54%	26%
England	56,490,045	23%	58%	18%

Table 1: Age (Census, 2021)

As highlighted by the 2019 National Travel Survey, people under the age of 30 and over the age of 70 tend to use buses more than those aged in between. Therefore, the proposals may benefit these groups more than other age groups.

Mode		All ages	0-16	17-20	21-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
		Local Buses (outside London)	No.	32	37	73	33	20	18	21
	%	3%	4%	9%	4%	2%	2%	2%	3%	6%
All modes	No.	953	863	824	860	1,073	1,121	1,037	995	800

Table 2: Trips per person per year (National Travel Survey 2019)

Ethnicity

As shown in Table 3, Exeter and Devon as a whole is lower in ethnic diversity than the national average.

Geography	Total	% White	% Mixed / multiple	% Asian / Asian British	% Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	% Other ethnic group

			ethnic groups			
Exeter	130,707	90.3%	2.5%	4.9%	0.9%	1.4%
Devon	811,642	96.4%	1.4%	1.5%	0.3%	0.5%
England	56,490,048	81%	3%	9.6%	4.2%	2.2%

Table 3: Ethnicity (Census, 2021)

Statistics indicate bus use is highest among people who identify as Black or of mixed ethnicity, and although the percentage of people from these ethnic minority backgrounds living in Exeter or wider catchment is low, they will benefit as a result of the scheme.

Health and disability

Although people with mobility difficulty make fewer trips overall, the proportion of their trips made by bus is higher compared to groups with no mobility limitations. A larger proportion of Exeter and Devon's population were considered to have good or very good health compared with England as a whole. However, Exeter and Devon have a slightly larger proportional population of people considered disabled under the Equality Act.

Geography	% Activities limited a little by disability	% Activities limited a lot by disability	% Not disabled under the Equality Act	% Very good and good health	% Fair health	% Very bad and bad health
Exeter	11.6%	7.3%	81.1%	82.2%	12.6%	5.2%
Devon	11.1%	6.9%	82%	83.4%	12%	4.6%
England	10.2%	7.5%	82.3%	81.7%	13%	5.3%

Table 4: Disability and General Health (Census, 2021)

Gender

In all geographies considered, there were slightly more females than males. Females tend to make a greater proportion of trips by bus than males. Thus, the proposals may benefit females more than males.

Socio-economic

The proportion and number of trips made by bus tends to decrease within increasing income, primarily due to those with higher incomes typically having greater access to alternative transport modes e.g. private car. The table below illustrates among those in the lowest income quintile (1st), 6% of trips are made by bus, compared to just 2% in the highest (5th) income quintile.

Mode		All income quintiles	1st income quintile	2nd income quintile	3rd income quintile	4th income quintile	5th income quintile
Local Buses (outside London)	No.	32	53	39	27	25	15
	%	3%	6%	4%	3%	2%	2%
All	No.	953	859	921	969	1,017	995

Table 5: Trips per person per year by income (National Travel Survey 2019)

Compared to England as a whole, Exeter and Devon are slightly less deprived with 49.8% and 49.6% of households not deprived in any dimension compared to England's 48.4%.

Geography	% Household is not deprived in any dimension	% Household is deprived in one or two dimensions	% Household is deprived in three or four dimensions
Exeter	49.8%	46.5%	3.6%
Devon	49.6%	37.6%	2.8%
England	48.4%	47.7%	3.9%

Table 6: Household Deprivation (Census 2021)

5. Stakeholders, their interest and potential impacts

- The local bus companies who run services along the impacted bus route. Improved bus services should have a positive impact on their business.
- Employers whose workers travel by bus. Improvements will improve access to work.
- St Sidwell's School and Exeter Mosque. The bus stop on York Road will be serviced by fewer buses (Countywide services using New North Road) due to the rerouting, the

school and Mosque will benefit from less congestion, road noise, pollution, and improved road safety outside their premises.

- Local residents in the St James' ward area. The bus stop on York Road will be serviced by fewer buses (Countywide services using New North Road) due to the rerouting, but local bus services will remain and the neighbourhood will benefit from less congestion, road noise, pollution, and improved road safety.
- Businesses which bus services provide access to including access for shopping and leisure. Rerouting of buses from York Road to Sidwell Street, with an additional stop on Sidwell Street will see businesses in Sidwell Street have increased access.
- Community organisations e.g., bus user groups and environmental pressure groups, who may advocate for bus service enhancements or Living Options Devon who represent people with disabilities who are more dependent on public transport for access to services.

6. Additional relevant research used to inform this assessment

- Public Consultation
- Road Safety Audit
- Arboriculture Report
- National Travel Survey Data
- Census Data

7. Description of consultation process and outcomes

A public consultation for the proposed bus gate on New North Road was held between 17 July 2023 and 14 August 2023. A survey was hosted online via Devon County Council's 'Have Your Say' page, feedback could also be submitted via email, post, or telephone. The full consultation report will be linked to the have your say page (devon.cc/NNR) once published.

The consultation was promoted via:

- Press release,
- Posts on Devon County Council social media pages,
- Posters on buses,
- Paid Facebook advertisement,
- A letter drop to residents, businesses, and organisations in the local area, including St Sidwell's Primary School, Exeter Mosque
- Emails to key stakeholders including bus operators, Living Options Devon and the Exeter and St David's Taxi Association

The questionnaire received 371 responses. A number of emails and letters were also received expressing feedback, asking for more information, requesting paper copies of

materials, and submitting paper questionnaires. The headlines of the consultation are summarised below.

Headline Results

- Of the questionnaire respondents, 282 (76%) supported the proposals (235 strongly supported, 47 somewhat supported). 83 (23%) respondents opposed the scheme (14 somewhat opposed, 69 strongly opposed), and a further 6 (2%) of respondents were neutral on their position.
- 97 respondents raised their appreciation for the benefits the scheme would bring to Longbrook Street and York Road by reducing traffic, increasing safety around the school and improving local air quality.
- 83 respondents cited their appreciation for the benefits to buses facilitated by the scheme including shorter journey times, a more direct bus route, and the potential to stop on Sidwell Street.
- 40 comments were submitted to the questionnaire that objected to the restriction of traffic in the city centre, however, the New North Road Bus Gate proposals do not restrict through movement or limit access for private cars. Other unsupportive comments included the need to improve bus service frequency and quality first; that the proposals were not needed, and that the benefits did not warrant the financial cost.
- A number of comments were received concerned with the impact on pedestrians and cyclists within the city centre as there would be more buses travelling on Sidwell Street and cyclists would have to share the lane with buses. Two responses were received from key stakeholders who shared these concerns but overall supported the scheme due to the benefits mentioned above.
- Other comments include concerns over enforcement, the need to improve signage in the area, the need to review signal timings to remove conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians, and the potential to allow taxis and/or HGVs through the bus gate.

Background information

8. Equality analysis

Under the Equality Act 2010, the local authority must consider how people will be affected by a service, policy or practice. In so doing we must give due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations across protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership (for work), sex, sexual orientation, race, and religion and belief. The Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation does not prevent the Council from taking difficult decisions which result

in service reductions or closures for example, it does however require the Council to ensure that such decisions are: informed and properly considered with a rigorous, conscious approach and open mind, taking due regard of the effects on the protected characteristics and the general duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations; proportionate (negative impacts are proportionate to the aims of the policy decision); fair, necessary, reasonable, and those affected have been adequately consulted.

- a) Is this group negatively or potentially negatively impacted, and in what way?
- b) What could be done or has been done to remove the potential for direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or disadvantage and inequalities?
- c) In what way do you consider any negative consequences to be reasonable and proportionate in order to achieve a legitimate aim?
- d) What can be done to advance equality further? This could include meeting specific needs, ensuring equality of opportunity and access, encouraging participation, empowering people, making adjustments for disabled people and action to reduce disparities and inequalities.
- e) Is there a need to foster good relations between groups (tackled prejudice and promote understanding) and help people to be safe and protected from harm? What can be done?

All residents by geographic area

A potentially negative impact of the scheme is reducing the services stopping at the two bus stops along Longbrook Street and York Road. This will disadvantage people living and working in the immediate vicinity of these stops. However other stops along the route such as along New North Road or the potential stops on Sidwell Street will only be a short distance away. It is considered that the benefits the scheme brings will outweigh the loss of these stops.

The stop on Longbrook Street in particular was often used by passengers heading towards Exeter High Street. A potential stop along Sidwell Street will mitigate the loss of this by providing a closer and more convenient stop for people heading to the High Street. At present the stop on Longbrook Street is on an incline and involves navigating a four-arm trafficked junction to reach the High Street / Sidwell Street.

Age

Greater proportions of trips are made by bus by young people (17-20 year) and older people (70+ years) than by the general population. The proposals will deliver passengers to Exeter Bus Station quicker and on a more direct route, enabling younger people better access to education and early career employment.

Rerouting of buses from York Road to Sidwell Street enables the city centre stop to be relocated from Longbrook Street to Sidwell Street. The existing stop on Longbrook Street is

on an incline, requiring passenger alighting here to walk uphill towards the High Street. A new stop on Sidwell Street would be on the level, providing a shorter and more level walk to the High Street, benefitting older passenger, who are more likely to be able to have a degree of restricted mobility.

Disability (includes sensory, mobility, mental health, learning disability, neurodiversity, long term ill health) and carers of disabled people

The proposals will deliver passengers to Exeter Bus Station quicker and on a more direct route. Staff are on hand at the bus station to help passengers with mobility difficulties and provide information.

Both York Road and Longbrook Street are at inclines which may put off people with mobility difficulties from disembarking. A potential stop at Sidwell Street where the platform is more level and closer to businesses in the city centre may be favourable.

Race and culture: nationality/national origin, ethnic origin, skin colour, religion and belief, asylum seeker and refugee status, language needs

Bus services which are for all to use are encouraged. As detailed in section 4, people identifying as Black or of mixed ethnicity make a greater proportion of trips by bus than the general population, and therefore delivering passenger to Exeter Bus Station quicker and more directly may particularly advance access to employment and services for people in these groups.

The Exeter Mosque and Islamic Centre for the South West were consulted about the changes but did not provide comment; however, individuals may have made representations. The proposals should reduce congestion in the local vicinity and create a quieter, less polluted environment.

Sex and gender identity and reassignment (including men, women, non-binary and transgender people), and pregnancy and maternity (including women's right to breastfeed)

Bus services which are for all to use are encouraged. As detailed in section 4, females make a slightly greater proportion of trips by bus than males, and there may be greater benefit to females in terms of improving their access to employment and other key services.

Sexual orientation, and marriage/civil partnership if work related

Bus services which are for all to use are encouraged.

Other relevant socio-economic factors and intersectionality

This includes, where relevant: income, housing, education and skills, language and literacy skills, family background (size/single people/lone parents), sub-cultures, rural isolation, access to services and transport, access to ICT/Broadband, children in care and care experienced people, social connectivity and refugee status/no recourse to public funds. Also consider intersectionality with other characteristics.

Bus usage is higher among lower income groups who in general may have less access to alternative transport modes, such as the private car. Providing faster and more direct bus access to Exeter Bus Station, and the employment hub of Exeter City Centre may particularly advance access to employment and services for people in the lower income group.

9. Human rights considerations:

We need to ensure that human rights are protected. In particular, that people have:

- A reasonable level of choice in where and how they live their life and interact with others (this is an aspect of the human right to 'private and family life').
- An appropriate level of care which results in dignity and respect (the protection to a private and family life, protection from torture and the freedom of thought, belief and religion within the Human Rights Act and elimination of discrimination and the promotion of good relations under the Equality Act 2010).
- A right to life (ensuring that nothing we do results in unlawful or unnecessary/avoidable death).

No direct implications, however, enhancements to bus services may enable individuals to exercise certain human rights more easily, such as the right to employment or the right to education (both enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) by improving access to employment/education. Bus services are open to everyone.

10. Environmental analysis

An impact assessment should give due regard to the following activities in order to ensure we meet a range of environmental legal duties. The policy or practice does not require the identification of environmental impacts using this Impact Assessment process because it is subject to (please mark X in the relevant box below and proceed to the 11, otherwise complete the environmental analysis information below):

Devon County Council's Environmental Review Process	
Planning Permission	
Environmental Impact Assessment	
Strategic Environmental Assessment	

- a) Description of any actual or potential negative consequences and consider how to mitigate against these.
- b) Description of any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes and consider how to improve as far as possible.

Reduce, reuse, recycle and compost

No negative consequences. No direct outcomes.

Conserve and enhance wildlife

Efforts were taken in the design of the scheme to retain the three trees situated on the eastern footway, enabling habitat to be maintained for wildlife.

Safeguard the distinctive characteristics, features and special qualities of Devon's landscape

No negative consequences. The three trees situated on the eastern footway will be retained.

Conserve and enhance Devon's cultural and historic heritage

Exeter underground passages pass closely underneath the scheme site, therefore due care will be taken to avoid disturbing the historical landmark.

Minimise greenhouse gas emissions

No net negative consequences. Increased bus use and less use of private cars leads to lower emissions and there will be reduced annual vehicle kilometres for the thousands of bus journeys now making shorter journeys.

Minimise pollution (including air, land, water, light and noise)

No negative consequences. Increased bus use and less use of private cars leads to less traffic noise and less pollution. Reduced annual vehicle kilometres for buses created by a more direct route will also deliver pollution benefits as well as reduced noise and congestion on the previous route where the narrow junction of York Road and Longbrook Street created problems with larger vehicles turning.

Contribute to reducing water consumption

No negative consequences. No direct outcomes.

Ensure resilience to the future effects of climate change (warmer, wetter winters; drier, hotter summers; more intense storms; and rising sea level)

No negative consequences. This scheme meets the objectives of DCC's declaration of a Climate Emergency. For example, it will lead to increased bus usage and less use of private cars, resulting in less traffic noise and greenhouse gases.

Other (please state below)

11. Economic analysis

- a) Description of any actual or potential negative consequences and consider how to mitigate against these.
- b) Description of any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes and consider how to improve as far as possible.

Impact on knowledge and skills

The scheme will improve public transport links into the city. The 2019 National Travel Survey highlighted that younger demographics of 30 years and below including school and university aged people disproportionately use buses more. Thus, improving buses supports individuals travelling to academic institutions, early carers jobs and training courses.

Impact on employment levels

Commuting is the most common trip purpose for bus users at 23% of local bus trips. Improved connection to employment hub of Exeter City Centre provides greater access to employment for all bus users, regardless of age, ethnicity or social background.

Impact on local business

Diverting bus routes to Sidwell Street will improve exposure of businesses compared to the more residential existing route. The potential to stop on Sidwell Street will further improve connectivity for bus passengers to local businesses.