

# Active Streets Heavitree and Whipton Trial Scheme Update

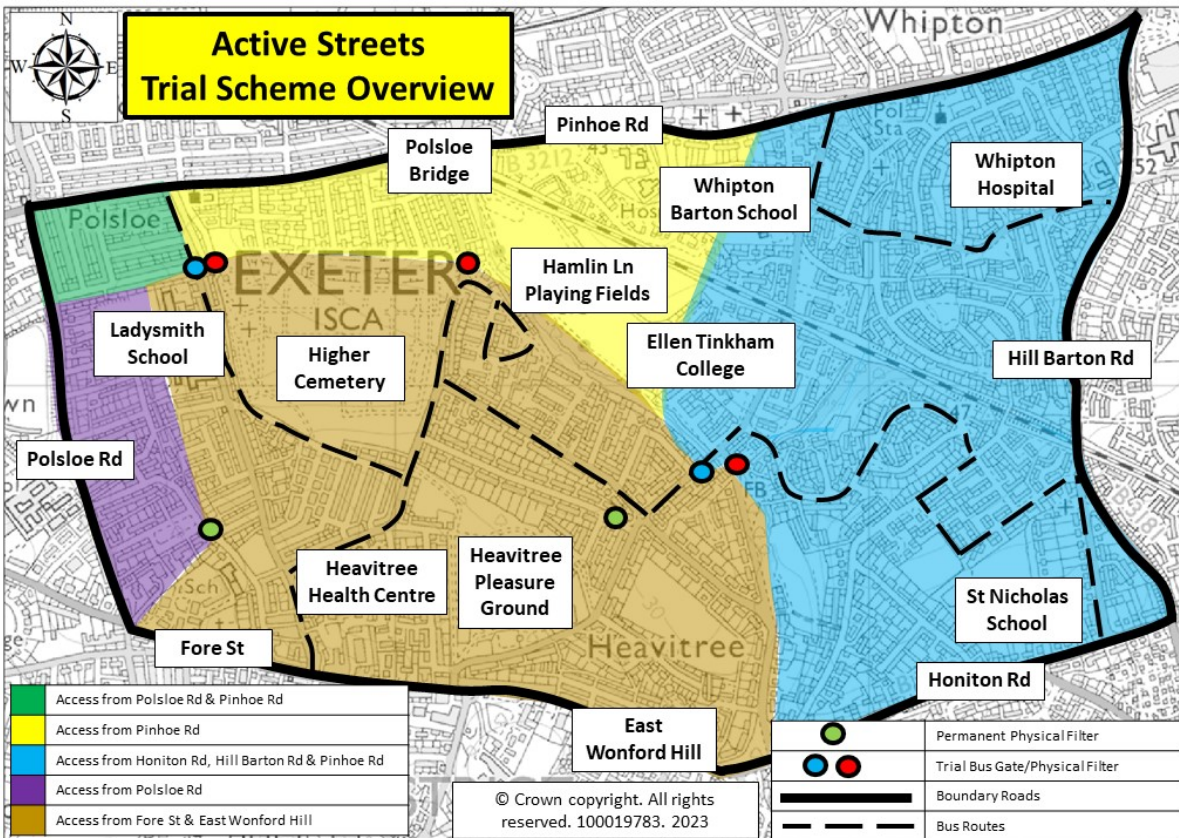
## Report of the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport

Please note that the following recommendation is subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

### 1) Recommendation

That the Committee be asked to note the monitoring update on the Active Streets trial.

### 2) Background/Introduction



**FIGURE 1: ACTIVE STREETS TRIAL SCHEME OVERVIEW.**

The Active Streets Trial Scheme (shown in Figure 1 above) encompasses the temporary installation of three physical modal filters and two bus gates in Heavitree and Whipton, along with temporary changes to waiting restrictions on Ladysmith Road. The physical modal filters prevent the passage of all vehicular traffic, and the bus gates use signage to prohibit the passage of traffic except for exempt classes of vehicle, including buses, emergency service vehicles and local authority service vehicles.

The trial scheme was approved by the Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee (HATOC) on 20 June 2023 and has been implemented through Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs), which came into force on 3 August 2023.

The trial scheme is intended to reduce traffic volumes on residential streets in Heavitree and Whipton. By doing so, it is intended to create safer and more attractive conditions for walking, wheeling and cycling, encouraging some people to switch from driving certain short distance trips. This may deliver public health benefits from increased physical activity and reduce traffic pollution on the residential streets.

Since the commencement of the trial, the Council has been receiving feedback on the changes through several channels, including:

- Responses to the Statutory Consultation relating to the ETROs
- Other emails, letters and telephone calls
- Public exhibitions
- Engagement with stakeholders, such as emergency services and taxi operators

A key emerging theme among feedback received has been concern about impacts of the trial scheme on taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) operations, both with respect to drivers/business owners and passengers. Representations have indicated that the scheme has made some taxi/PHV journeys longer, increasing costs to passengers, many of whom are reliant on taxis as they are unable to walk long distances, use bus services or drive for their health, shopping and education needs. In some cases there have been threats towards taxi/PHV drivers from clients seeking illegal use of the bus gates.

### **3) Modifications to bus gate restrictions**

In light of public and stakeholder concerns (see Section 3 below), and in accordance with resolution c) of the 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023 HATOC, a delegated decision has been made to modify the ETROs for the Active Streets trial scheme to exempt taxis and PHVs from the bus gate restrictions. This will facilitate more direct taxi/PHV access to locations within the scheme area. It is considered that this will likely reduce the adverse impacts described below, whilst maintaining reduced traffic on the residential streets compared to pre-scheme levels.

To provide consistency across the local road network, the bus gate restrictions on Wonford Road, Exeter will also be modified to exempt taxis and private hire vehicles.

To use the bus gates, taxis and PHVs must display the mandatory three bus lane stickers, available from their Licensing Authority.

To ensure the modified restrictions are enforceable, signage will be modified at each of the bus gates, with the signage shown on the left of Figure 2 below to be replaced with that on the right.

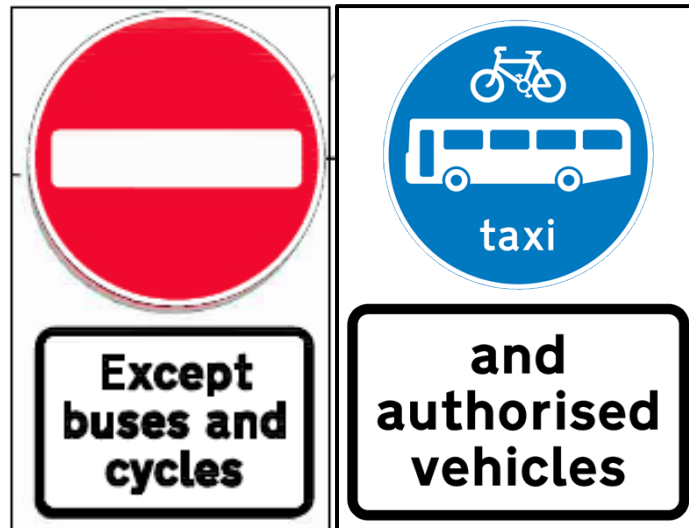


FIGURE 2: LEFT – EXISTING SIGNAGE TO BE REMOVED. RIGHT –SIGNAGE TO BE INSTALLED.

#### 4) Consultation feedback

##### Statutory Consultation

The Statutory Consultation relating to the Active Streets trial scheme is ongoing, having commenced on 3 August 2023. Over 4,000 responses have been received to date.

Modifying the ETROs to exempt taxis and private hire vehicles will necessitate an extension to the consultation period, which will now end six months after the modification is made; however, the 18-month maximum period for the trial, which began in August, will not be extended. Representations received prior to the modification will still be considered when deciding whether or not to make the changes permanent.

##### Public Exhibitions

Since the 20 June HATOC, several public exhibitions have been held in relation to the scheme. Each of these was attended by approximately 10 staff (officers of Devon County Council and Exeter City Council and employees of the consultancy WSP), in addition to members of Devon County Council and Exeter City Council.

Prior to the commencement of the trial, public exhibitions were conducted from 16:00 to 19:00:

- On 25 July 2023 at Park Life Heavitree, Whipton Lane
- On 26 July 2023 at Whipton Community Hall, Pinhoe Road

Together these were attended by over 900 members of the public. These exhibitions were intended to provide information and answer queries, rather than seek consultation feedback (as the statutory consultation had not yet commenced), however it was noted that many attendees expressed opposition to the scheme.

After the trial had commenced, two further public exhibitions were conducted from 16:30 to 18:30:

- On 12 September 2023 at Whipton Community Hall, Pinhoe Road
- On 14 September 2023 at St Mark's Church, Pinhoe Road

These additional events were attended by over 750 members of the public. As the statutory consultation had commenced, paper copies of the consultation form were made available for attendees to fill in at the event or return by post. As with the previous exhibitions, attendees could also ask questions of or give feedback directly to officers and councillors.

Key concerns raised at the September public exhibitions included:

- The previous (Phase 1 and Phase 2) consultations were inadequate, as many people were unaware of the consultations;
- The scheme has increased the length of some car journeys;
- The scheme has increased the length and cost of some taxi/private hire vehicle journeys;
- The scheme is perceived to have impacted emergency services;
- The scheme has had an adverse impact on various social groups, including:
  - Older people
  - Disabled people
  - Carers
- The scheme has displaced traffic onto other roads, resulting in increased congestion and delays.

However, some exhibition attendees also expressed support for the trial, for reasons including:

- The trial scheme has encouraged some individuals to switch from driving to cycling for some journeys
- It has made school pick-up/drop-off times at schools, in particular Ladysmith Infants and Junior Schools, significantly calmer
- Streets were quieter as a result of lower traffic volumes

#### Engagement with taxi and private hire vehicle operators

On 26 September 2023, Devon County Council officers, assisted by an officer from the Licensing Authority (Exeter City Council), met with representatives of taxi and PHV operators. Some representatives indicated that they specialised in providing transport for disabled people and school transport for children with special educational needs. Some of these children were reported to have been particularly adversely impacted by the changes, as they may be sensitive to changes in routines and increases in journey durations.

More generally, representatives indicated that the scheme has had adverse impacts on their operations, as the installation of the bus gates and physical modal filters have required them to take longer routes for certain journeys. In addition, they indicated that traffic displacement onto the boundary roads had increased congestion and delays. These two factors were said to have significantly increased costs to passengers for some journeys.

Consequently, some representatives indicated that some passengers were now choosing not to make certain journeys. Representatives reported that some passengers had reacted aggressively and/or refused to pay when asked to pay higher fares or encouraging drivers to use bus gates illegally with threats.

In light of the above, PHV operators indicated that they were having to pay drivers for additional hours worked, due to increased congestion. Additionally, the congestion was said to be reducing the number of jobs they could complete per hour, particularly during peak times, increasing wait times for passengers.

The PHV representatives in attendance requested that, if the trial remain in place, they be permitted to pass through the bus gates, which they indicated may partially mitigate the issues described above.

### Engagement with emergency services

Devon County Council officers have continued to liaise with emergency services during the trial, and met with each of the South Western Ambulance Service, Devon and Cornwall Police and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service in September and October 2023.

During these discussions we received comments including no formal comments to make at the current time; being unaware of any adverse incident reports attributable to the scheme; that very few incidents had been reported; that it was difficult to evaluate the impact of the scheme on response times but that increased traffic on boundary roads would potentially delay emergency vehicles.

### Engagement with disability groups

Devon County Council officers met with representatives of Living Options Devon, including disabled service users, on 11 October 2023 to discuss the impacts of the trial scheme. At this meeting, attendees indicated that the trial had made journeys by taxi and car longer, which had negatively impacted their energy levels. Concerns were also raised regarding impacts on social isolation for those without access to a car, and regarding reductions in the amount of time carers can spend with patients (due to increased delays, which were attributed to the scheme). Officers agreed to meet further with Living Options Devon during the trial and we are arranging additional discussions with care providers to further understand their perspectives on the scheme.

## 5) Technical data

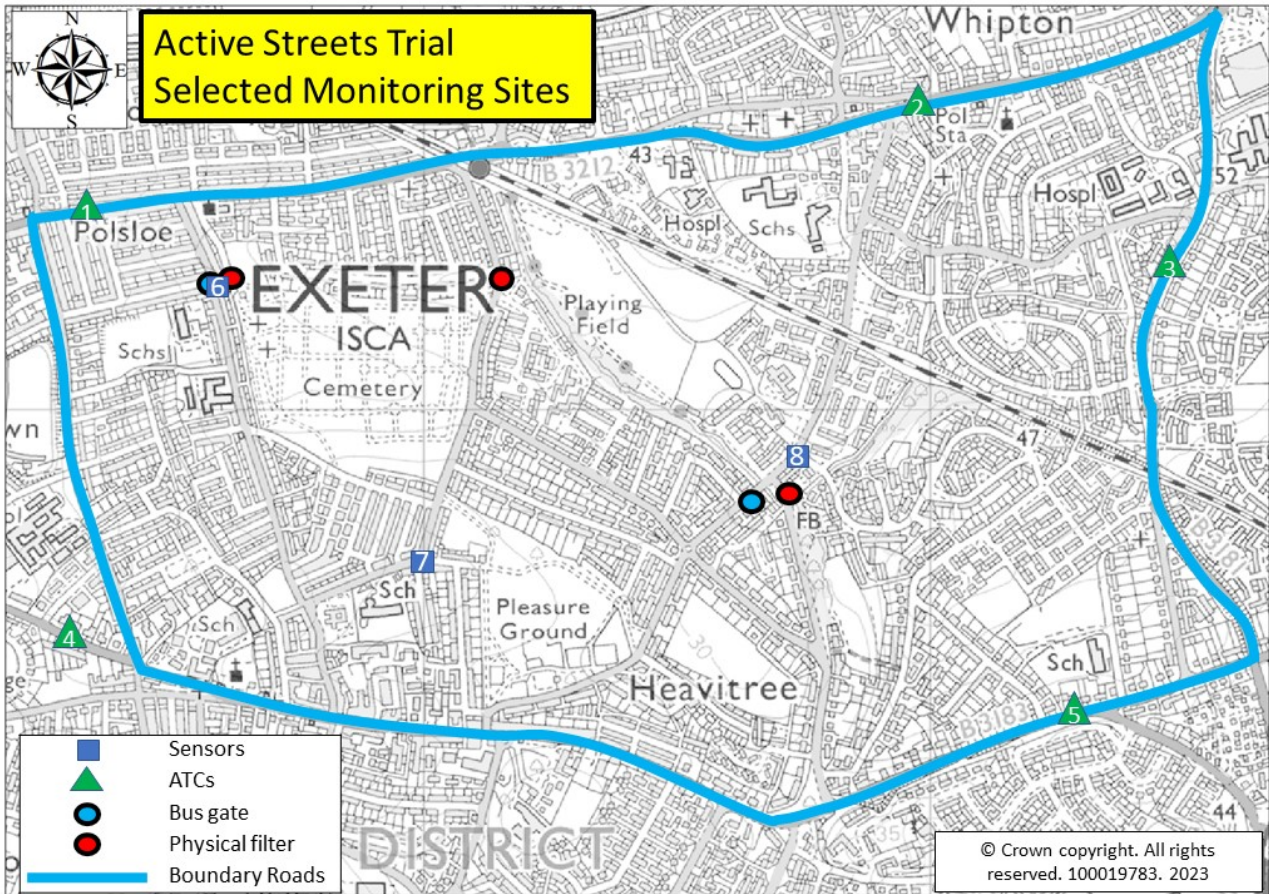
### Traffic monitoring

Devon County Council is undertaking monitoring of vehicular traffic and active travel (walking and cycling) levels throughout the trial, to evaluate the trial scheme's impacts. This is being undertaken using:

- **Manual Classified Counts (MCCs)** – 12-hour (0700-1900) counts of vehicular traffic and cycles on selected dates, manually enumerated using video footage.
- **Automatic Traffic Counts (ATCs)** – Continuous counts of vehicular traffic, automatically enumerated using inductive loops or radars.
- **Sensors** – Continuous counts of vehicular traffic, cycles and pedestrians, automatically enumerated using artificial intelligence-based sensors.



Data recorded to date by selected ATCs and sensors, the locations of which are shown in Figure 3 below, is detailed below.



**FIGURE 3: LOCATION OF SELECTED ATCs AND SENSORS.**

At the time of writing this report, the sample of ‘during trial’ data available is limited (approximately 2 months, 07/08/2023 - 05/10/2023), therefore samples of pre-trial data covering comparable date ranges have been produced:

- For **ATCs**, an equivalent period from 2022 has been used - 08/08/2022 - 06/10/2022
- For **sensors**, data for equivalent periods from 2022 is unavailable, therefore a period immediately before the trial with the same ratio of school holiday days to school term days as the ‘during trial’ date range has been used - 12/07/2023 - 02/08/2023.

Once a larger sample of ‘during trial’ data is available, it is intended to then compare this data to the baseline figures presented in the report to the 20 June 2023 HATOC meeting (and available on the scheme website), which cover pre-trial date ranges of 12 months for ATCs and 6 months for sensors.

For all data sources, data excludes weekends and public holidays. 12-hour (0700-1900) flows have been used so that the below data is comparable with data from MCCs (which will be presented in a future update). For some sensors, the count lines do not cover the whole of the footways, therefore some figures may be underestimates.

Location	Data source
Pinhoe Road West	<b>ATC 1</b> , between Palsloe Rd and St Marks Ave Junctions
Pinhoe Road East	<b>ATC 2</b> , between Vaughan Rd and Whipton Barton Rd Junctions
Hill Barton Road	<b>ATC 3</b> , between Whipton Barton Rd and Peppercombe Ave Junctions
Heavitree Road	<b>ATC 4</b> , between Grendon Rd and Palsloe Rd Junctions
Honiton Road (eastbound only)	<b>ATC 5</b> , between Warwick Rd and Sidmouth Rd Junctions
Park Road	<b>Sensor 6</b> , at Park Rd/Ladysmith Rd Junction
Ladysmith Road	<b>Sensor 6</b> , at Park Rd/Ladysmith Rd Junction
Hamlin Lane	<b>Sensor 7</b> , at Hamlin Ln/Roseland Cresc Junction
Roseland Crescent	<b>Sensor 7</b> , at Hamlin Ln/Roseland Cresc Junction
Vaughan Road	<b>Sensor 8</b> , at Vaughan Rd/Thornpark Rise Junction
Thornpark Rise	<b>Sensor 8</b> , at Vaughan Rd/Thornpark Rise Junction

### Vehicular traffic

The ATC data recorded to date indicates that there has been a moderate (>5%) increase in traffic at two locations on boundary roads and a slight (<5%) change at three locations. The largest recorded increase is on Hill Barton Road, where flows have increased from approximately 14,900 vehicles per day to 16,600 vehicles per day, an increase of 11%. In contrast, the sensor data on the residential streets indicates that there has been a reduction in traffic in all six locations.

Location	Vehicles per day pre-trial	Vehicles per day during trial	Change
Pinhoe Road West	13,243	13,923	+5%
Pinhoe Road East	16,970	16,945	+/-0%
Hill Barton Road	14,879	16,586	+11%
Heavitree Road	14,582	14,584	+/-0%
Honiton Road (eastbound only)	10,583	10,758	+2%
Park Road	813	524	-36%
Ladysmith Road	1,368	244	-82%
Hamlin Lane	1,826	1,443	-21%
Roseland Crescent	368	347	-6%
Vaughan Road	3,089	714	-77%
Thornpark Rise	1,300	1,197	-8%

### Walking and cycling

The sensor data on the residential streets indicates that there has been an increase in pedestrian flows at five out of six locations (the exception being Roseland Crescent, an existing cul-de-sac in close proximity to Heavitree Pleasure Ground) and an increase in cycle flows at all six locations.

Location	Pedestrians per day pre-trial	Pedestrians per day during trial	Change	Cycles per day pre-trial	Cycles per day during trial	Change
Park Road	489	565	+15%	90	127	+41%
Ladysmith Road	425	531	+25%	89	90	+1%
Hamlin Lane	42	44	+6%	90	99	+10%
Roseland Crescent	879	788	-10%	168	169	+1%
Vaughan Road	85	98	+14%	234	281	+20%
Thornpark Rise	113	124	+10%	119	127	+7%

### Air quality monitoring

Exeter City Council (ECC) conducts annual monitoring of air quality in Exeter<sup>1</sup>, primarily using diffusion tubes on streets across the city. This has shown a gradual reduction in air pollution levels in recent years, with levels of nitrogen dioxide being below the objective at every site except East Wonford Hill in 2022.

Earlier this year, ECC were awarded funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for an air quality project focusing on the Heavitree Road corridor. The funding supports provision of sensors along B3183 Heavitree Road/Fore Street/East Wonford Hill/Honiton Road to provide continuous air monitoring alongside their existing nitrogen dioxide tubes. The sensors will be able to monitor the fluctuations across time (hourly, daily, by month etc) and help to establish patterns in concentrations, enabling a better understanding of the causes and impacts of congestion and traffic volumes.

Working in partnership with ECC and to supplement this monitoring, Devon County Council is arranging and funding four additional air quality sensors to be installed on roads within the scheme area:

- Polsloe Road, between Park Road and Pinhoe Road junctions
- Polsloe Road, near Heavitree Road junctions
- Pinhoe Road, between St Johns Road and Commins Road junctions
- Lower Hill Barton Road, near Honiton Road junction

Both abovementioned sets of additional sensors will provide data for 15-minute periods in real time, whereas the diffusion tubes provide monthly average nitrogen dioxide concentrations. Therefore, the additional sensors will enable the impacts of the scheme on air quality to be evaluated more rapidly than using the annual monitoring data.

<sup>1</sup> See <https://exeter.gov.uk/clean-safe-city/air-quality/air-quality-monitoring/air-quality-monitoring-summary/>



## 6) Financial Considerations

As per the report to the 20 June 2023 Exeter HATOC, the Active Streets trial scheme (including these modifications) is being funded from Capability and Ambition Fund funding secured from Active Travel England. The scheme is currently within budget.

## 7) Legal Considerations

The trial has been implemented through Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs). These allow changes to traffic regulations to be introduced on a temporary basis, so that their impacts can be better understood before deciding whether to make the changes permanent.

The ETROs include provision empowering a specified officer of the authority who made the order, or a person authorised by such a specified officer, to modify or suspend the operation of the order or any provision of it if it appears essential:

- (a) in the interests of the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of traffic,
- (b) in the interests of providing suitable and adequate on-street parking facilities, or
- (c) for preserving or improving the amenities of the area through which any road affected by the order runs.

This power may only be exercised after consulting the police and publishing the appropriate notices.

ETROs can remain in place for a maximum of 18 months, following which the changes must either be removed or made permanent (using permanent Traffic Regulation Orders).

The statutory consultation for the Active Streets trial scheme commenced on 3 August 2023, and was originally scheduled to continue for six months, until 2 February 2024. However, when the ETRO for the Prohibition of Vehicles is modified to exempt taxis and PHVs from the bus gate restrictions, the six-month statutory consultation period will restart. Previous consultation responses will be considered, and this does not change the end of the 18-month window within which the changes must either be removed or made permanent. The trial period will remain at a maximum of 18 months since the scheme commenced in early August.

A separate ETRO will be implemented to exempt taxis and PHVs from the bus gate restrictions on Wonford Road, Exeter. A statutory consultation will also be undertaken in relation to this ETRO, which will last for six months from the date of implementation (unless subsequently modified).

The ETROs relevant to the Active Streets trial scheme are:

- Devon County Council (Various Roads, Exeter) (Prohibition of Vehicles) Experimental Order 2023 – Ref 6090
- Devon County Council (Ladysmith Road, Exeter) (Traffic Regulation) Experimental Amendment Order 2023 – Ref 6109

Responses can be provided through the Online Comments Form available at [devon.cc/exeterstreets](https://devon.cc/exeterstreets), a paper copy of which can be requested:

- By email - [exeterstreets@devon.gov.uk](mailto:exeterstreets@devon.gov.uk)

- By telephone - 0345 155 1004
- By post - Transport Planning, Devon County Council, Room 120, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4QD

Alternatively, written responses can be submitted by email or by writing to 'Director of Legal & Democratic Services, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter EX2 4QD', quoting reference imr/DEV001/458.

## 8) Equality Considerations

Where relevant, in coming to a 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

in relation to the protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership (for employment), pregnancy and maternity, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation).

A decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage.

In progressing the overall scheme, an Impact Assessment has been prepared which was circulated separately to HATOC Members and also is available on the Council's website at <https://www.devon.gov.uk/impact/heavitree-and-whipton-exeter-active-streets-trial/>.

Members will need to consider the Impact Assessment for the purposes of this item/meeting.

According to government statistics<sup>2</sup>, in 2021, taxi/PHV usage accounted for 2% of all trips for people with mobility difficulties, compared to only 1% of all trips for people without mobility difficulties, and people in households without access to a car made around 8 times as many taxi/PHV trips as those with access to car.

Therefore, by facilitating easier access to and from the Heavitree and Whipton area by taxi/PHV, the modification may help reduce disadvantages faced by people with mobility difficulties and people without access to a car. The modification will also address concerns raised regarding the impacts of the scheme on children with special educational needs and disability who travel to school by taxi or PHV.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-statistics-england-2023/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-statistics-england-2023>

## 9) Summary

During the Active Streets Trial, Devon County Council has been undertaking engagement with key stakeholders, including members of the public, emergency services and taxi/PHV operators. Over 4,000 responses have been received to the ongoing statutory consultation.

The Council has also been monitoring traffic, walking and cycling flows within the scheme area. Initial results indicate an increase in traffic on some boundary roads, but there have also been reductions in traffic and increases in walking and cycling on several residential streets.

By permitting taxis and PHVs to proceed through the bus gates, the modification to the Active Streets ETRO will facilitate direct access to more properties. This will address some of the concerns raised at recent public exhibitions and during engagement with taxi/PHV operators, particularly in relation to impacts on disabled people. However, it will likely retain many of the potential benefits of the scheme, by continuing to reduce through vehicular traffic on the residential streets.

The additional ETRO to also exempt taxis and PHVs from the bus gate restrictions on Wonford Road will provide consistency across the local road network.

### **Meg Booth**

Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport

**Electoral Divisions: Heavitree & Whipton Barton, St Sidwells & St James, St David's & Haven Banks**

### **Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers**

Background Paper: Nil

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