

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 4 February 2021

Report of the Head of Service Highways

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
Preston City;

Lancashire County Council (Bus Station Southern Access, Lord Street and Tithebarn Street, Preston, Preston City) (Suspension, Bus Only Street and Bus Gate) Experimental Order 2020 (Appendices 'A' - 'B' refer)

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Executive Summary

An Experimental Traffic Regulation Order was created to reduce vehicular traffic movements around the refurbished Preston Bus Station to improve the safety of pedestrians in the area and to prevent unauthorised vehicles from accessing the bus station apron. The Order will allow authorised vehicles to service off street properties that will be directly affected by the proposed changes, including the Guild Hall. This was considered necessary as the subway, that was available to cross the now redundant west bus station apron and Tithebarn Street, has now been closed and as a result there is an increase in the numbers of pedestrians crossing Tithebarn Street.

In addition to this the changes to the Preston Bus Station have included alterations to the accommodation of coaches and long distance bus services. The layout leaves a possible cut through for traffic of the coach station area. A bus gate has been introduced by the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order to prohibit this route for all traffic except buses, taxis and authorised vehicles.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to approve the making permanent of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order for the bus only street on Tithebarn Street, Lord Street and Bus Gate on Lord's Walk as set out in the attached Order (Appendix 'A') and plan (Appendix 'B').

Background and Advice

The Experimental Traffic Regulation Order was introduced as part of the works to improve the city centre traffic flows following the improvements to both Preston Bus Station and Preston Markets. This work being mainly to support the traffic flows around the bus station whilst supporting sustainable public transport routes and removing the problems caused by vehicles using the route from Ring Way to Church Street as a cut through.

The refurbishment of the bus station has moved all the bus gates to the east of the station building with land that was previously used as the west apron being converted to a 'public space'. The subway below the west apron, crossing under Tithebarn Street which was available to passengers to access the station building has now been closed and this has resulted in a much higher number of pedestrians crossing the road.

The introduction of these restrictions will reduce the vehicular traffic movements on the southern end of Tithebarn Street to a minimum, thereby increasing pedestrian safety. By removing the 'cut through' permitted traffic will be controlled along Tithebarn Street allowing access to Church Street and Fishergate.

The alterations to the Preston Bus Station has formed a dedicated area that is a coach and long distance bus service station. The layout of this facility allows these services to enter the bus station from Lord's Walk and exit directly on to Lord Street. The result of this layout is that there is a route that some vehicles could use as a short cut to the city centre. Whilst such vehicles are cutting through the bus station they are also considered to be a danger to passengers boarding or alighting these services. Reports have indicated that a small number of drivers are incorrectly using this. The bus gate that is included in this Experimental Traffic Regulation Order allows the introduction of camera enforcement to effectively enforce this restriction.

Should they be approved, both the Bus Only Street and Bus Gate will be enforced by the use of cameras.

Consultations

As the Order was introduced as an experimental order the details were advertised in the local press not less than a week before the restrictions came into force and notices posted on site on 27 January 2020 and maintained on site until 31 July 2020. The notices requested that objections were made within six months of the order coming into force.

The period of advertising commenced prior to the national lock down on 23 March 2020 and the changes were in place over the period of the consultation. It is considered that the consultation has still been carried out effectively.

Objections

Over the consultation period two objections were received, one was from Preston City Council and the other from a local business. After the implications and the

information regarding the authorised vehicles procedure were clarified, Preston City Council withdrew their objection and so only one objection now remains.

The local business proprietor was concerned that the alterations are preventing customers with mobility issues from being able to access their business. There was an indication that a number of customers had chosen not to use their business as a result. The concerns regarding access extended to deliveries to the property along with vehicles used by trades' people undertaking maintenance on the building.

Engineers Response

The Objector was visited by an engineer working on the project to explain the situation with regard to the changes. It is correct that the changes have resulted in unauthorised vehicles not being able to pass in front of businesses south of the junction of Tithebarn Street with Old Vicarage. This prevents vehicles from using the taxi bay for disabled parking. This practice was not permitted prior to the present changes and therefore the introduction of the bus lane has not altered this.

As part of the overall works covering the city centre, changes have been made to the designation of parking places within the bus station car park to increase the provision of bays dedicated to disabled parking. The increased provision along with the formation of the public space that was formerly the west apron of the bus station means that there is disabled parking within 90 metres of the affected businesses, all of which can be accessed without stairs.

The changes will make the area more accessible for pedestrians and therefore the changes would improve overall access to the businesses that are directly affected by the introduction of the bus lane.

With regard to building maintenance and deliveries, the proprietor of the business will need to contact Parking Services to register the vehicles used for these purposes to be added to the list of exempt vehicles.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

Should the current Experimental Traffic Regulation Order not be made permanent then the overall balance of the traffic management of the city centre will not be achieved. By not having a bus lane along Tithebarn Street a short cut will be opened up across the city centre. Over time this will attract a higher volume of vehicular traffic and result in safety issues for pedestrians accessing or egressing the Preston Bus Station along with increased traffic flows to Church Street and Fishergate.

The Experimental Traffic Regulation Order also allows the effective enforcement against vehicles taking the shortcut between Lord's Walk and Lord Street. Whilst vehicles are undertaking this route, the drivers potentially endanger passengers accessing or egressing the coach and long distance bus service.

If the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order is not made permanent the Order will expire on 27 July 2021, allowing all traffic to pass between Ring Way and Church Street and the use of the bus station to pass between Lord's Walk and Lord Street will not be able to be enforced by cameras.

Legal

A significant part of the formal consultation for this experiment was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, through a time where public movement was restricted. It is foreseeable that this will have resulted in a reduced 'visibility' of the proposal to those people likely to be affected by the restrictions. With that being said, the measures taken to bring attention to the proposal were considerable and the restrictions have now been in place for approximately 12 months. It is therefore considered that the public have had sufficient opportunity to be aware of the restrictions (and the associated consultation) and to see their effect 'in action' such that the consultation exercise has not been unduly compromised by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Financial

If the bus lane is not accepted the road signs and infrastructure that have been put in place will need to be removed and replaced with new signage. This will include the bus lane cameras that have been fitted to enforce the bus lane and bus gate which will need to be funded by the county council.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None		
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Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
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