

THE LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (VARIOUS ROADS, LOUGHBOROUGH,  
BOROUGH OF CHARNWOOD) (IMPOSITION OF WAITING AND LOADING RESTRICTIONS)  
EXPERIMENTAL ORDER 2014

THE LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (VARIOUS ROADS, LOUGHBOROUGH,  
BOROUGH OF CHARNWOOD) (VARIOUS RESTRICTIONS OF MOVEMENT AND CONTRA-  
FLOW CYCLE LANE) EXPERIMENTAL ORDER 2014

**STATEMENT BY LOVE LOUGHBOROUGH – THE LOUGHBOROUGH BUSINESS  
IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)**

Background

Love Loughborough, the Loughborough Business Improvement District (BID), was established in 2012 following a vote of businesses in the BID area which covers Loughborough Town Centre.

The BID represents the 600 businesses in the area. Its purpose is to promote and improve the town centre and to increase footfall and trade to the benefit of businesses and the public alike.

Ever since the formation of the BID we have played a full part in the consultation process on the Loughborough Transport Scheme, comprising the Inner Relief Road and the improvement works through the town centre. We consistently supported the overall scheme because of the significant benefits we believe it brings to the town centre as a whole in terms of regeneration and economic growth potential.

On the Options put forward for bus movement through the Market Place, we were strong advocates and supporters of Option C – no buses through Market Place. We were therefore very pleased when the County Council backed option C at its Cabinet meeting in April 2014 as the basis for the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order and again in October 2015 when the Cabinet decided to take the steps necessary to make the Order permanent.

It is clear that support for the scheme has grown over the years as people and businesses became more aware of its benefits. In the original consultation in 2006, 56% of respondents supported a bus-free solution. By the 2013 consultation, this figure had risen to 57.5%. In the latest consultation (based on 12 months' experience of the scheme in operation) the number in favour had risen to 67%. People like the scheme and want it made permanent. This is the BID's view too.

The County Council's consultants, Aecom, have identified 6 criteria against which the scheme should be judged – Safety, Ease of Movement, Public Realm, Bus Services, Economy and Environment. We agree with that approach and our comments below address each of those criteria in turn.

Safety

There can be little doubt that Option C, with no buses going through, will be safer than either Options A or B. This is because the presence of bus movements in an otherwise pedestrian area is bound to increase the potential for conflict between pedestrian and bus movements. With no buses, there is certainty, and people are free to move through the Market Place confident that no vehicles will be coming through. We appreciate that cycles and service vehicles are permitted before 10.00

am and after 4.00 pm, but that is the same regime that operates in the rest of the Market Place. People are used to it and these are the quietest times in terms of pedestrian movement.

As the Director of Highways and Transport noted in his report to Cabinet in October 2015 “the removal of buses from the Market Place has eliminated all risk of collision between pedestrians and buses and removal of other traffic except for loading has significantly reduced the risk of collision with other motor vehicles within the most heavily pedestrianised part of the town”.

### Ease of Movement

Again, Option C offers the best outcome for pedestrians in terms of ease of movement across and through the Market Place. One of the key benefits from the scheme from the BID’s point of view was to join together the two halves of the town centre, separated for so long by the very heavy traffic on the old A6 which passed right through the Market Place. Option C means that pedestrians are able to move freely through the Market Place at any point they choose. Our footfall counters demonstrate that the most significant increases in footfall have taken place at the bottom of Church Gate and Biggin Street at the Market Street end. The key attractors in terms of footfall are the Rushes Centre east of the old A6 and the Carillon Centre/Market Place west of the old A6. These are now easily and conveniently linked as a result of Option C. We understand that Options A and B would have directed pedestrians to crossing points near the junctions of Biggin Street and Baxter Gate rather than the free movement along desire lines allowed by Option C.

For people with disabilities or with limited mobility, the existence of a traffic free, level, paved pedestrian area offers a much safer and more convenient arena for movement than one with buses going through and raised kerb lines. Movement for those in wheelchairs or on mobility scooters is significantly easier.

For cyclists, the ability to use the Market Place, free from buses, before 10 and after 4 is a significant benefit.

For vehicular movement, all three Options banned general traffic from the Market Place and restricted access in High Street and Baxter Gate.

### Public Realm

Again, there can be no doubt that Option C has created a piece of public realm which has hugely enhanced the town centre experience. The new area of pedestrianisation now completes the pedestrianisation of the whole Market Place and enables it to function as a single space. It has created a public space which offers huge potential for events, activities and performance and which is the envy of many other towns. The BID will renew its efforts to persuade the County Council to apply a common regulatory regime to the whole of the Market Place to ensure that it realises its full potential.

We fully endorse the comments of the Director of Highways and Transport on this topic in his report to Cabinet last October:

“The current situation clearly offers the most attractive pedestrian experience when compared to the pre-trial situation and to either of the options that allow buses to proceed

through the Market Place. It shows a marked improvement in all assessment areas, suggesting that the scheme has successfully met all objectives in this area”.

### Bus Services

The BID has always made the case that it is important to compare the impact of Option C with the impact of Options A and B rather than with the situation before the Town Centre Scheme. All three Options involved the removal of the bus stop in the Market Place and the stop outside the Halifax Building Society. It was therefore inevitable, under all three Options, that bus stops would be relatively more remote from the centre of the Market Place.

We believe that, for the majority of bus services, the revised routes and stops on High Street, Baxter Gate, Swan Street, Fennel Street and Ashby Square offer equally good accessibility to the town centre for the bus companies and their customers with walking distances comparing favourably with those offered under Options A and B.

We submitted detailed measurements of all bus stop distances from the centre across the three Options and compared them with the pre-scheme situation to demonstrate this point (attached). We did recognise that there is one particular service (the Arriva 126/127 southbound service to Leicester) where the nearest stop to the town centre is significantly further away than it would have been under Options A or B. However, even for this service, the distance from the Lemington Street stop to the Market Place is only 275 metres compared with 168 metres for the stop under Options A and B. We do not believe that to be an unacceptable distance. However, in recognition of the potential concerns, we did make several suggestions to the County Council and the bus companies about how bus stops and routes could be revised to improve the situation (attached).

Having said all that, we are very pleased to learn that the bus companies have now withdrawn their objections to the ETRO, presumably in response to modifications agreed with the County Council to routes and/or stops. We hope that the removal of the major objections, coupled with the widespread public support for the trialled option and the County Council's desire to see it confirmed will persuade the Inspector to recommend the confirmation of the Order.

### Economy

From the BID's point of view, one of the core reasons for supporting Option C is the belief that it offers the best prospects for the promotion and regeneration of Loughborough Town Centre by linking together the two halves of the Town Centre and by creating a first-class public space for the staging of events, activities and performance and for the simple enjoyment of the people of Loughborough.

Of course, it is difficult to demonstrate any precise correlation between town centre performance and whether or not buses run through a short stretch of the Market Place. The macro-economic forces affecting town centres are powerful and the situation in Loughborough needs to be seen in the context of falling footfall nationally and a strong and continuing trend towards on-line shopping. All of the advice to centres like Loughborough is that we have to offer an experience which is unique and different from that available in out of town centres and shopping malls and which gives people a reason for coming into town. The BID believes that a fully pedestrianized Market Place is an essential prerequisite to allow us to create the town centre experience through the imaginative use of a

splendid public space. This would simply not be possible under either options A or B with buses running through the space.

Having said all that, there is compelling evidence that the performance of Loughborough Town Centre is remarkably strong, particularly when compared to the national average, and that improvements have continued since the completion of the road works and the start of the experimental TRO:

*Vacant units:* The number of vacant units is at its lowest level since the BID was formed. In November 2015 the number of vacant units was 50 or 8.3% compared with a high of over 70 units and a 13% rate. What is also encouraging is that 8 of the current vacant units are being fitted out for occupation.

*Car Park Use:* Car Park use in the Borough Council's main car parks has been the highest of any of the last 6 years in 8 out of the 12 months following the start of the experiment. Car park use in 2015 was 8.6% higher than in 2014.

*Footfall:* In Loughborough, footfall in Q1 2015 was -1% compared with the previous year, + 3% in Q2 and +2% in Q3. This compares with a 1.9% fall in UK footfall in 2015. In Christmas week 2015 (21<sup>st</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> December) footfall in Loughborough was + 3.0% compared to 2014 whereas footfall across the UK was - 2.3%

### Environment

On this topic we can do no better than to quote the comments of the Director in his report to Cabinet last October:

“Preliminary readings suggest a large improvement in air quality at the monitoring sites on High Street and Baxter Gate. The removal of traffic from the Market Place has reduced the level of noise pollution, particularly during the daytime. It is also reasonable to assume that the reinstatement of traffic along Swan Street would impact negatively on the air quality and level of noise pollution currently experienced in the immediate vicinity”.

### Conclusions

We believe that, taking all 6 of the accepted criteria for testing into account, the experimental scheme (Option C) performs better than either of the other two options. In the light of this, the widespread support of the public and the business community and the withdrawal of the major objections to the scheme, we urge the Inspector to support the continuation of the ETRO scheme and to recommend to the County Council that it should be made permanent.

We realise it is not part of the Inspector's remit to look at the overall regulatory regime across the whole Market Place but we request that he asks the County Council to undertake an early review with the aim of having a common regime in place.

Loughborough BID Company Ltd.

January 2016

**Nearest bus stops to centre of Town (Old Market Place Bus Stop)**

Service	Before	Distance to Market Place	Option A	Distance to Market Place	Difference From Before	Option B	Distance to Market Place	Difference From Before	Option C	Distance to Market Place	Difference From A/B
Kinch 5 Northbound	Market Place	0m	High Street	60m	+ 60m	High Street	60m	+ 60m	High Street	60m	None
Kinch 5 Southbound	Halifax	66m	Swan Street	146m	+ 80m	Swan Street	146m	+ 80m	Swan Street	146m	None
Kinch 11/12 Northbound	Market Place	0m	High Street	60m	+ 60m	High Street	60m	+ 60m	High Street	60m	None
Kinch 11/12 Southbound	Halifax	66m	Swan Street	146m	+ 80m	Swan Street	146m	+ 80m	Swan Street	146m	None
Arriva 126/7 to Leicester	Halifax	66m	Swan Street	168m	+ 102m	Swan Street	168m	+ 102 m	Lemyngton Street	275m	+107m
Arriva 126/7 to Shepshed	High Street	93m	High Street	126m	+ 33m	High Street	126m	+ 33m	High Street	126m	None
Sprint to Station	Halifax	66m	Swan Street	165m	+ 99m	Swan Street	165m	+ 99m	Baxter Gate	258m	+ 93m
Sprint to Campus	Ashby Square	277m	Swan Street	164m	- 113m	Swan Street	164m	- 113m	Swan Street	- 113m	None
Skylink to Leicester	Halifax	70m	Swan Street	190m	+ 120m	Swan Street	190m	+ 120m	Lemyngton Street	268m	+ 78m
Skylink to Airport	High Street	82m	High Street	82m	0	High Street	82m	0	High Street	82m	None

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**SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT BY LOVE LOUGHBOROUGH – THE LOUGHBOROUGH  
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)**

Background

The County Council appointed Aecom to undertake an evaluation of the ETRO trial. The BID only received Aecom's Final report on 4<sup>th</sup> January. We would be grateful if the following comments on it by the BID could be taken into account.

Executive Summary

In the executive summary the report says "Of retailers, there is a large proportion who now think that the trial option has worsened this area of Loughborough and that the town is quieter than one year ago".

Looking at the economy section, the findings of the snapshot survey don't appear to justify this as the headline conclusion. In the first place only 25 businesses out of 81 completed the survey. Secondly, the figures in the pie charts say the following:

Support or Oppose? – 40% oppose, 60% supported or neither

Worse or better? – 44% worse, 56% better or no change

Quieter or busier? 48% quieter, 52% busier or just as busy.

The statement that there is a "large proportion" who think the town is worse or quieter is misleading. It gives the impression that the majority of the retailers directly affected are against the scheme. This is not the case. There is an even larger proportion who feel that the town is better or unchanged and who think that the town is busier or just as busy.

Public Transport

In the summary on public transport the report says "It can therefore be identified that Option A (or B) would be the best option from the perspective of bus operators and bus users". We understand the conclusion in terms of the bus operators, but are not convinced that the same can be said of bus users. The bus users were not asked how they rated the three options. They were asked their views on the trial scheme and the impact it had. In that regard they rated the scheme highly (7 out of 10). 66% said that the scheme had improved or substantially improved the situation. 21% thought there had been no change. Only 12% thought it worse. We cannot know what they would have said if Option A or B had been implemented. Bus passengers are pedestrians and shoppers too so their

comments might reflect an overall balance of their experience. The bus stops were relocated in all three options, removing the Swan Street and Market Place stops in each case. The general public was strongly in support of the trial scheme (giving it a score of 8 out of 10). 78% of the general public felt that the town was just as busy or busier than before. Even the bus operators gave the scheme a score of 5 out of 10.

### Economy

In the Economy section the report says “It is noted, however, that many of the vacant retail units relate to changes in national shopping chains (such as HMV, Blockbuster etc.) that are unrelated to the performance of Loughborough itself”. That comment is true when the units became vacant but both those examples (the HMV and Blockbuster units) have now been re-occupied. Again, three units in the heart of the Market Place vacated by nationals (Dorothy Perkins, Top Shop and Dolland and Aitcheson) have also been re-occupied. This does make a positive statement about the attractiveness of the town. All the units mentioned have been re-occupied since the completion of the road works.

The report says that “Option A and B score more favourably for bus operators and (some) bus users (who constitute a large group of people accessing the town centre.....)”. Aecom do acknowledge that the surveys may have over-estimated the proportion of bus users. We think they have too. There was a comprehensive survey of the catchment area population by NEMS Market Research in 2013 for Peter Brett and Associates as part of their Retail and Town Centre Study for Charnwood Borough Council. That was based on a telephone survey of 900 residents. That showed that for food shopping 87.3% of journeys are made by car and 2.8% by bus. For clothes and shoe shopping 78.3% of journeys are made by car and 12.7% by bus. The National Travel Survey, England, 2013 says that for shopping 66% of trips are made by car, 21% on foot and only 9% by bus. For commuting, 69% of trips are by car, 9% on foot, 9% by rail and only 7% by bus.

Love Loughborough BID

January 2016

## LOUGHBOROUGH TOWN CENTRE ETRO

### SUGGESTIONS FROM LOVE LOUGHBOROUGH BID

#### 1. Control of Traffic through High Street and Baxter Gate

It is quite clear to anybody familiar with Loughborough that the intention of making High Street and Baxter Gate essentially bus only except for access is simply not working. Regular observation confirms that through traffic is using these streets both by traffic continuing straight ahead at the Southfields Road junction or by traffic turning left from Wood Gate into High Street.

We believe that this is partly because local traffic ignores or is unaware of the restrictions but mainly due to the inadequate signage. There needs to be much clearer signage at both the Southfields Road/Leicester Road junction and at the Wood Gate/Leicester Road junction. This should take the form of large, clear signage saying something like "No Entry - Buses only (except for access)". We think this should be reinforced with some design features such as a narrowing of the entrance into High Street and/or a different road surface or colour. Those using parking areas accessed off High Street should have to exit towards Baxter Gate.

The Traffic signals at the Baxter Gate junction with the new road should be set to favour the movement through the junction of buses, possibly with a bus- activated system. Consideration should be given to introducing two lanes to allow easier movement of buses through the junction.

The Loading bays at the bottom of Baxter Gate (near the High Street junction) would work well if properly enforced. Too often they are used by unauthorised vehicle either causing delivery vehicles to use the double yellow lines thus preventing buses from negotiating the turn into Baxter Gate or unauthorised traffic parking on the yellow lines with a similar effect. We realise that enforcement is a matter for the Borough Council but we urge the County Council, as the Highway Authority, to work with the Borough Council to ensure firm enforcement of these regulations.

#### 2. Control of Traffic through the pedestrianized area

It is also clear to people in Loughborough that there is significant use of the pedestrianized area by unauthorised traffic. It is a very common sight to see Heavy Goods Vehicles and delivery vehicles driving through. Cyclists routinely ignore the controls. It is clear that some through goods vehicles are confused by their sat-nav systems. We urge the County Council to ensure that information on the new road system is fed through to the appropriate agencies so that systems can be updated. However, it is also clear that people are confused by inadequate or unclear signage. Instructions for cyclists are particularly unclear. Some clearly think that "except cyclists" means they are exempt from the controls. Although some improvements have been made at the entrance to the pedestrianized area we believe more could be done through signage, design of entrance features and a different road surface or colour. In particular, we believe the carriageway should be block paved and set at the same level as the rest of the pedestrianized area. We believe that number plate recognition cameras should be installed.



One of the main reasons for our support for full pedestrianisation was the potential to make full use of the area for events, promotions and activities. We want the pedestrianised Market Place to be controlled as a single entity with the same regulatory regime operating throughout the area as it does in the original pedestrianized area on Market Days and major event days. We want to be able, for example, to spread the Market across the new area or to use it for rides, installations, staging or performance and we need a revised TRO to achieve that.

### 3. Traffic into Pinfold Gate

We believe there is a case for allowing traffic to enter Pinfold Gate from Wood Gate and thereby gain access on to the new road via Aumbery Gap. We believe there is room there for a safe slip road to be created. This would allow traffic from Wood Gate to easily access the new road compared with the current awkward right into Leicester Road then left into the new road. Currently traffic is not doing that but turning left into High Street and on to the new road via Baxter Gate. WE would hope that parking and delivery arrangements could be maintained in Pinfold Gate

### 4. Signage and Design generally

We believe there needs to be a review of signage throughout the area affected by the ETRO to ensure that there is no confusion. Entrances to the bus only areas need to be designed in a way that makes clear there is no access for through traffic. The entrances at the start of the new pedestrianized areas at both Swan Street and High Street need to be marked with more substantial features and perhaps narrowed down and emphasised with different surface treatments. We hope that the promised pedestrian crossing between Lloyds and Denhams is implemented

### 5. Operation of Traffic Lights

We think that the operation of all the traffic light sequences needs to be reviewed to ensure the smooth movement of traffic around the town. In particular we would like to see bus-activated operation at key locations such as the top of Baxter Gate and at Ashby Square. There is frequently congestion at the Bridge Street/ Fennel Street junction and also at Bridge Street/Derby Road

### 6. Southbound Arriva Services

We recognise that the operation of the Arriva southbound services has been affected by the location of the new bus stop at Lemyngton Street. In fact, this stop is only about 270 metres from the bottom of the Market Place – and only about 125 metres further away than the stops on High Street would have been if Options A or B had been implemented. However, we recognise that there is an issue of perception and a feeling from some that the stop is disconnected from the town centre. We think there are several options to address this:

- a. Currently, the southbound Arriva service uses Regent Street and Derby Road before turning into Bridge Street. This means negotiating awkward junction movements at each end of Regent Street where there are no traffic signal controls. This allows them to use the stop at Tanvic Tyres, but this stop, too, is awkward for the Town Centre. We suggest that the service should use Broad Street instead of Regent Street. Access into Broad Street is easier and access out is traffic light controlled. This route is actually nearly 100 metres shorter than the Regent Street route. It would require new bus stops but we

suggest that a stop could be created on Broad Street near the Sainsbury's exit (some changes to parking would be required and possibly to the carriageway) or on Bridge Street outside the Travelodge where a bus lay by could easily be created.

- b. Another option would be for the service to run down Ashby Road and then turn left into Greenclose Lane, left into The Rushes and then right into Bridge Street (the light sequence there may need to be adjusted). This would allow the service to use the existing bus stops at Greenclose Lane outside Sainsbury's or on The Rushes near the Thai Grand. Both of those are more convenient for the Town Centre than the Tanvic Tyres stop.
- c. A third option involves inserting a loop into the route by turning right into Leicester Road from the new road and then via High Street and Baxter Gate back to the new road. This would add about 800 metres to the route but on a 35 km route we don't think this is a big issue. It would allow the service to use the High Street and Baxter Gate stops which would be much more convenient for bus users.
- d. Other options might include using the same route currently used by the Kinch cross-town service i.e. via The Rushes, Ashby Square, Frederick Street and Browns Lane and rejoin the A6 at Wood Gate. A more radical re-route would be via Epinal Way (where the College and University could be served by a new stop) and then Forest Road, Wood Gate, High Street and Baxter Gate which would allow the stops on those streets to be used. Again, this option would only add about 800 metres to the route.
- e. Several People have suggested that Baxter Gate and High Street could become two-way for buses only. We recognise there are some technical issues with carriageway width and turning circles at the High Street/Baxter Gate junction but we think the feasibility of this should be investigated.

#### 7. Northbound Arriva Services

We understand from Arriva that they find that the route through the Bridge Street junction into Derby Road and then into Regent Street is often congested and affects the reliability of the service. Also, turning out of Regent Street into Ashby Road can be very difficult.

We think there is a solution to this which will be much better for the service in terms of efficiency and also allow more convenient pick up and drop off points for bus users. We suggest that the service turns left from Bridge Street into The Rushes and joins the Ashby Road via Derby Square and Ashby Square. This would be much more efficient and allows a choice of bus stops to be brought into consideration – stops outside the Rushes Centre, stops at Wilko or stops in Ashby Square outside the Griffin. This route is less than 250 metres longer than the current route used by Arriva, but much more efficient and customer friendly in our view

#### 8. Funding of Changes

We appreciate that there will be costs associated with some of our suggestions above. However, we were assured by Pete Price (then Assistant Director Highways and Transport) that there were sufficient funds available and unspent from the Department of Transport funds for the whole Town Centre Improvement scheme which would be ear-marked for any required adjustments or modifications to the final scheme. We would be grateful for an assurance that this is still the case.

Love Loughborough, November 2015