

APPENDIX C

OBJECTION/ISSUES RAISED AND OFFICER RESPONSES.

1. Issue raised

The bus lane does not need to be 24 hours: a morning peak hour provision is sufficient.

Officer Comment

This comment was dealt with in the 2009 Cabinet Report. Briefly, the argument is primarily safety-led: three lanes in the off-peak encourages faster, less disciplined traffic, travelling closer to the frontages on the A6. A 24-hour lane is easier to enforce, and less potentially confusing for road users and frontagers. More generally, a 24-hour lane gives a greater level of predictability for bus operators, giving them greater flexibility to provide a more reliable, punctual and higher-quality service. This in turn helps to encourage use of public transport in preference to the private car, a key objective in the Local Transport Plan.

2. Issue raised

Bus occupancy is low, especially after 9 a.m., so there is no call for a bus lane.

Officer Comment

The scheme is driven not only by morning peak journey time benefits, which are impacted by bus occupancy, but by the broader modal shift factors referred to in 1. above.

3. Issue raised

Buses often do not use the bus lane unless they have to pick up passengers at the Tennis Club lay-by, as they have to pull out again into the main traffic at the roundabout. Also, services like the X3 and X7 do not use the lane, possibly because they didn't see themselves as 'Local' as prescribed on the plates.

Officer Comments

Buses do not need to use the bus lane unless they anticipate journey time savings. Bus operators are encouraging drivers to use the bus lane where journey time can be saved.

4. Issue raised

Buses are speeding down the bus lane. Very dangerous for vehicles coming from Granville Ave. The buses that do use the bus lane are doing so to avoid the 40 mph speed limit. The speeding double decker buses in

the bus lane are so close to properties, that there is insufficient time to negotiate the road safely.

Officer Comment

Speed surveys of buses using the inbound A6 carried out on three separate weekdays from 0800 to 1100 showed overwhelming compliance with the 40 mph speed limit. Buses are not exempted from adhering to the legal speed limit by using the bus lane. Vehicles emerging at an appropriate speed from frontage properties should be presented with no greater problems when presented with a bus lane than a conventional traffic lane, particularly having regard to the greater time between passing vehicles, even at peak hours.

5. Issue raised

The new road resurfacing has done little to stop cars breaking the speed limit towards the roundabout. The newly painted speed limit signs do not work. Why was a speed camera and 30mph limit refused?

Officer Comment

Although general traffic speeds were not the principal focus of the bus lane scheme, some local narrowing of the lanes was necessary to accommodate the bus lane, and this, coupled with the visual impact of red surfacing proposed on the bus lane if the Order is confirmed as permanent, could be expected to exercise a calming effect on traffic. Speed surveys were carried out on the two general Leicester-bound traffic lanes since the introduction of the experimental Order; the results indicate 85 percentile speeds (the speed not exceeded by 85% of vehicles) of 38.6 and 38.0 mph in the off-peak for the nearside and offside lanes respectively.

With regard to speed cameras and the imposition of a 30 mph limit, the national criteria for speed cameras is not fulfilled. A 40 mph limit was deemed appropriate to rôle of road, and it is likely that there would be compliance issues with a 30 mph limit; indeed, this 40 mph limit has had better than average compliance.

6. Issue raised

There are occasions when visitors or trades people need to park on the road outside properties, risking a parking ticket. Residents in surrounding areas will be expected to put up with unwanted vehicles parking outside their houses and clogging up the side roads.

Officer Comment

There is no restriction on loading and unloading during the off peak period, which would cater for deliveries and loading / unloading by trades people. Those whose parking requirements are not met by the existing off-street parking attached to all the frontages will need to find places on nearby

roads, but car sharing and use of public transport where possible would help to reduce this burden.

7. Issue raised

Risk of accidents / fatalities through frontagers being forced to pull out across pedestrians, cyclists and speeding double decker buses into the main stream of traffic travelling at 40 mph.

Officer Comment

At present motorists leaving private driveways on the A6 have to exercise care as they cross an existing footway which is currently, illegally, used by cyclists who consider it unsafe to use the carriageway. Elsewhere in the County, many footways have been converted to shared footway/cycle tracks without such concerns being realised. Motorists have to exhibit caution upon entering the highway for all forms of traffic and hence it is the responsibility of adjacent landowners to ensure adequate visibility for any access into the highway. In addition, cyclists on routes such as this have a responsibility to ride responsibly and with care to other users.

8. Issue raised

Residents have no choice but to use the bus lane.

Frontagers turning down Granville Avenue have difficulty crossing the bus lane, joining the main traffic, then turning left again down Granville Avenue - waste of time and it causes hold ups.

Officer Comment

A clarification is to be included into any permanent Order to make explicit that frontagers will have access across the bus lane to reach the general traffic lanes. Frontagers will still need to avoid travelling along the length of the bus lane, even for the relatively short distance to Granville Avenue.

9. Issue raised

There is no serious peak hour queuing problem.

Officer Comment

Video surveys before and after implementation of the scheme show that there is considerable inbound queuing from the Stoughton Drive South signals in the morning peak. The significant journey time savings demonstrated by the scheme, summarised in Appendix A, show that there was clearly a congestion problem to be overcome.

10. Issue raised

The scheme is an unnecessary expense in times of recession.

Officer Comment

The County Council sets its annual transport budgets in accordance with the objectives in its Local Transport Plan, and fully mindful of the prevailing economic conditions. Reducing bus journey times, and thereby making the bus service more attractive, is a fundamental component of the LTP strategy.

Schemes proposed for the Capital Programme are scrutinised to ensure that they are value for money, particularly rigorously so in the current climate, and in this case there has been a substantial contribution to the cycle component of the scheme by Sustrans.

11. Issue raised

The scheme has made no difference to traffic flows.

Officer Comment

The main short-term focus of the scheme is the reduction of journey times for bus passengers, not a reduction in traffic flows. It is nevertheless hoped that in the longer term the increased attractiveness of the bus service will help to encourage transfer of travel to buses from the private car.

12. Issue raised

The lanes have been narrowed from Oadby Hill Drive causing unnecessary merging of traffic.

Officer Comment

The general traffic lanes on the southern section of the bus lane are narrower than previously, as the bus lane needs to be wider than the lane which it replaced, but the increased care and reduced speeds which motorists need to observe has been viewed as a benefit rather than a disadvantage in transport terms.

13. Issue raised

It appears to be the County Council's intent to downgrade this area and decrease property values.

Officer Comment

There is no information to suggest an adverse impact on property value from previous similar schemes, but if residents feel that they are entitled to compensation as a result of this work within the highway then they are entitled to submit a claim to the County Council under the Land Compensation Act 1973 in respect of their interest in the land affected by public works.

14. Issue raised

We suffered a great deal of inconvenience and sleepless nights when the main work was in progress.

Officer Comment

With regard to the timings of the works, due to the width of the carriageway and the requirements for working space and safety zones as detailed within Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual, the works could only be undertaken using a road closure. With the volume of traffic using this road and the availability of suitable alternative diversion routes, the most appropriate time to carry out the works was during the night so that the associated non-direct costs could be kept to a minimum. Flashing warning lights and the audible warning beepers fitted to the construction vehicles need to be used when the vehicles are moving on site, as part of the requirements under the relevant health and safety legislation.

As the norm, when we are working outside what would be considered the normal working day, we consult with the local District/ Borough Council Environmental Health Officer and we also carry out an information letter drop to adjacent fronting properties explaining our working methods.

The only outstanding work relating to this scheme is the application of coloured surfacing to the bus and cycle lanes if the experimental Order is confirmed as permanent, and every effort will again be made to ensure that as little inconvenience as possible is caused to residents.

15. Issue raised

No real consultation process. Local inhabitants raised many objections to the scheme and no evidence has been provided that they have been listened to.

Officer Comment

All responses, local and otherwise, received during the original scheme consultation, the consultation on the original Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for the bus lane, the six-month period following the introduction of the experimental TRO, and comments received since the expiry of the consultation period for the experimental Order, have been kept on record and reported to local County Council Members and the County Council Cabinet, as well as the Oadby and Wigston Highways Forum when appropriate. This report forms part of this process. Indeed, it is as a consequence of the strength of local opinion that it was decided to pursue an experimental TRO rather than implement the full TRO immediately.

In addition to the comments above, which were submitted by individuals, a package of questions was submitted by Leicester Road frontagers as a body. The issues that were submitted were as follows:

16. Questions directed at Elizabeth McCalla, County Solicitor:

- 16.1 Was Ms McCalla [*sic*] aware of the change of design to the road layout before she wrote her reasons [*the Statement of Reasons for the experimental TRO*] for the proposal?

Officer Comment

When the Order is drafted and passed to the County Solicitor, the submission includes a Statement of Reasons alongside the Order Schedule, the list of consultees and a reference plan. Hence the County Solicitor will have been aware of the nature and extent of the scheme when the Statement of Reasons was signed. The County Solicitor's primary concern will have been the legal accuracy of the Order rather than with the internal procedures leading up to the submission. Design changes leading up to that point would not have been highlighted.

- 16.2 Who is it that decides what is a major or minor change?

Officer Comment

The impact of any design changes is determined by the teams involved with the design in the Environment and Transport Department. They are therefore best placed to assess whether such changes are of sufficient magnitude to warrant being brought to the attention of Members, and if necessary subjected to further consultation. This was not felt to be the case with this scheme.

- 16.3 Does the change of design of the road layout alter her opinion for the need for a 24 hour bus lane?

Officer Comment

The need for a 24 hour bus lane is assessed on the basis of highway safety, clarity and enforceability, as addressed in 16.1 above, and this is not affected by the reduced extent of the bus lane referred to in this comment. The need for a 24 hour bus lane is premised on highway safety, clarity and enforceability, as addressed in Issue 1 above, and this is not affected by the reduced extent of the bus lane referred to in this comment.

- 16.4 On what grounds did she write (her letter dated 23rd November 2009) "there are negligible highway capacity implications in providing a bus lane as proposed here, as it makes use of a little used service lane"

Officer Comment

The letter referred to is the Statement of Reasons referred to in 16.1 above. The use of the former service lane for parking was assessed by video survey in the early stages of the scheme. The survey indicated that the service lane is only lightly used for parking, and all the frontages have off-street parking.

17 Questions directed at the Environment and Transport Department design team:

17.1 What monitoring of improvement of bus running times has there been during the experimental period?

Officer Comment

Peak hour bus journey time surveys before and after the scheme was implemented have reduced by 44% between the Brabazon Road and Stoughton Drive South junctions.

17.2 Are you aware that since the bus lane was announced, a bus company has ceased operating on the Oadby route?

Officer Comment

The service that has ceased operation is the 131 evening service; the route is still used by six remaining services, one running every 12 minutes during the day, and every 30 minutes in the evenings and at weekends.

17.3 What percentage of buses that do not stop at the racecourse bus stop, use the bus lane?

Officer Comment

This has not been explicitly measured. However, as noted in Question 3 above, bus drivers must use their own judgement as to whether or not to use the bus lane, depending on whether journey time will be saved. If there are no passengers waiting at the Racecourse stop, and if there is little or no congestion, then it may well be that no journey time will be saved in using the bus lane, and there is no pressure on buses to do so in these circumstances.

17.4 Have speed checks been carried out on the few buses that actually use the bus lane?

Officer Comment

Bus speed surveys carried out on three weekdays since implementation of the bus lane show that the 85 percentile speed of buses using the bus lane between 0930 and 1100 was 37.2 mph, and the average speed 27.3 mph, well within the applicable speed limit.

17.5 Do you agree that all buses that use the bus lane have to pull out into a 40 mph carriageway at the end of the bus lane [and that] this was not in the original design of the road layout?

Officer Comment

The extent of the bus lane was curtailed from that shown at consultation for two main reasons:

- More detailed design identified the need to provide a wider bus lane than initially envisaged to allow safe joint use by

cyclists, and this was too wide to be accommodated alongside the existing general traffic lanes on the approach to the Racecourse roundabout beyond the bus lay-by.

- Consultation with cyclists revealed that cyclists wishing to stay on-road over the roundabout often wish to begin positioning themselves on the road earlier than the end of the bus/cycle lane as it was shown in the consultation plan, beyond the lay-by. Leaving the lane as it was would have left cyclists with uncomfortably sharp, and hence dangerous, manoeuvres to make if they were to be positioned appropriately at the roundabout.

In order to make the bus lane available to all traffic at off-peak periods, it would be necessary to realign the traffic lanes to provide continuity of the nearside (bus) lane. An option has been investigated to address this issue by realigning the lane into which the bus lane runs – it currently terminates in the bus lay-by – so that it aligns with the nearside of the carriageway between the lay-by and the Racecourse roundabout. Traffic in the offside lane is merged into the middle lane by the same point. It is, however, felt that this arrangement:

- *would involve a sub-standard taper over the merge length for the speed of road concerned;*
- *would adversely affect the behaviour of traffic running up to the Stoughton Drive South signals, which would need to begin to merge ahead of the lights in order to be in the appropriate lane after the signals, with significant consequences for congestion at peak times;*
- *would encourage this behaviour most at peak hours, when traffic flows and congestion would be likely to be at their greatest, and when the greatest amount of traffic would be in the offside lane;*
- *would be potentially confusing for traffic turning right out of Stoughton Drive South, again particularly at peak times, needing to choose between joining the centre lane directly, or joining the offside lane and needing to merge into the centre lane almost immediately;*
- *could pose problems for cyclists using the bus lane and staying on-road, potentially being placed in conflict with traffic crossing to the nearside lane after the end of the bus lane.*

18 Safety concerns

- 18.1 It is not safe for the residents to exit their driveways by reversing their vehicles into a 40 mph bus lane - it is difficult enough with pedestrians walking behind vehicles when trying to reverse out; the highway code

states that you must not reverse out into a main road and oncoming traffic.

Officer Comment

If there is insufficient space within the property to turn vehicles round, the Highway Code suggests that motorists reverse into and drive out of driveways giving onto main roads. To ensure the greatest safety therefore, frontages should reverse into accesses. Regardless of whether reversing or driving forwards, however, it is incumbent on the motorist to exercise appropriate care when emerging onto the Highway.

- 18.2 The original slip road was implemented to provide safe ingress and egress to the driveways of the residents' houses.

Officer Comment

After this length of time the reasoning for the provision of a service lane at this location is not clear, however regardless of the reasons, it is certain that traffic and wider environmental conditions were not as they are now. It is now considered that better use of the service lane can now be made by buses.

- 18.3 Caravans, trailers etc. cannot be hitched up without contravening the restrictions.

Officer Comment

The presence of the bus lane prevents stopping within the bus lane, and hitching/unhitching trailers and caravans cannot be considered a loading/unloading operation, so this must be carried out away from the bus lane, if it cannot be undertaken within property boundaries.

- 18.4 This is an urban area and heavily used by pedestrians and cyclists, so why have we a 40 mile per hour speed limit with buses in excess of 10 ton travelling at this speed only feet away from the public?

Officer Comment

Reference is made in 17.1 to the appropriateness of the current 40mph speed limit. There are many instances in the County where a 40mph speed limit applies in areas used by pedestrians and cyclists.

- 18.5 How can disabled persons wishing to visit park up safely without contravening the restrictions?

Officer Comment

Disabled people are not permitted to park in the bus lane at any time as the order currently stands. Therefore, if possible, space should be made for the duration within the existing off-street frontage parking provision for disabled people to park or be dropped off.

19 Property values and noise/vibration

19.1 The value of properties within the bus lane restriction has depreciated, and interest in buying the properties has decreased, partly due to the present economic climate, but further since the bus lane order and loading ban have been put in place.

Officer Comment

Issue 13 above addresses this issue.

19.2 There is evidence to show that there is rumbling and vibration within the houses as the buses travel by at speed.

Officer Comment

Although there will be some noise and vibration from traffic on the A6, it is unlikely that the situation would have worsened for frontages at that distance from the road as a result of buses moving one lane closer. Indeed, the nuisance from a bus moving at a steady speed in the bus lane would be likely to be less than a bus further away subject to stop/start conditions at congested times