

**CABINET – 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2014****LOUGHBOROUGH TOWN CENTRE – BUS TRIAL CONSULTATION****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT****PART A****Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to outline the outcome of the Loughborough town centre bus trial consultation, the options and impacts of the three options consulted on and to make recommendations based on the results of the consultation.

**Recommendation**

2. The Cabinet is recommended to:
  - a) Note the outcome of the consultation exercise attached as Appendix B to this report;
  - b) Note that (i) the recommendation of the officers is balanced given the degree of risk and relative benefits, and accordingly the professional recommendation is for a trial of Option A; but (ii) there is evidently a consensus amongst local elected representatives and local businesses, excluding bus operators, for a trial of Option C.
  - c) Consider its decision in light of the balance of risk and opinion indicated above.
  - d) Accordingly, delegate authority to the Director of Environment and Transport to make and amend the appropriate experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) in order to give effect to a trial for a period of up to 18 months with effect from the end of the construction period in autumn 2014.
  - e) Request officers to report any representations received during the first 6 months of the Order's operation to the Cabinet in order that consideration can be given to the final form of the permanent order for bus operations through Loughborough Town Centre.

### **Reason for Recommendation**

3. An important aspect of the recently completed Loughborough Inner Relief Road scheme has been to consider whether buses should be allowed to travel through the Market Place once the town centre improvements are completed in autumn 2014, by way of public consultation.
4. Having considered the results of the consultation and the available evidence officers have concluded that there is a significant risk that the changes to the public transport network within Loughborough arising from the prohibition of buses on Market street and Swan Street would potentially disadvantage bus users, which would lead to a reduction in bus patronage and lead to a reduction in economic activity for the town from bus users, furthermore the response from the bus companies suggest that the cross town services would be severed leading to more difficult cross town bus journeys. On balance it is considered that these dis-benefits are not outweighed by the potential additional economic benefit arising from the implementation of option C which would provide a traffic free public space for 6 hours per day.
5. Therefore, it is the view of officers that Option A, a trial of shared space with two way bus access is the preferred option. This will allow buses through the Market Place/Swan Street to assess the use of the shared space and maintain the existing levels of accessibility for bus users. Whereas a trial of Option C is likely to have a significant impact on the bus network with no guarantee that the commercially operated bus networks would return should the trial have negative impacts and be reversed. Furthermore it is considered that a trial of option A would place the council in a stronger position at any subsequent public enquiry should there be a decision to remove the bus access following the completion of the trial and overall this is considered to be the lower risk approach.

### **Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

6. The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the consultation and concerns raised in responses at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2014. Having considered the outcome of the consultation and representations supporting option A and representations supporting option C, together with advice from officers the Committee unanimously supported the implementation of a trial on the basis of option C (no buses) on the basis that it considered the potential additional economic benefits to Loughborough outweighed the risk of the potential dis-benefits to bus users. The comments of the Committee will be reported to the Cabinet at this meeting.
7. The effect of the order will be to prohibit vehicles on Swan Street and Market Place Loughborough except for buses and access for loading between the hours of 4.00pm and 10.00am to allow a trial of two way bus access as detailed in Option A of the consultation leaflet attached at appendix A.

### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

8. The Cabinet on 6 March 2013, agreed to a further consultation on allowing buses through a pedestrianised Market Place as some time had passed since the first consultation process in 2005/06 when cabinet agreed to proceed with the scheme on the basis of a one way bus trial. This consultation was designed to help decide a

preferred option for bus routeing once general traffic is removed. The chosen option would initially be implemented on a trial basis.

### **Resources Implications**

9. The publication and arrangements for any trial in Loughborough Town Centre would be delivered within existing staffing resources. The Loughborough Town Centre improvements would be built as designed and to programme to meet the requirements of Department for Transport funding rules.
10. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted on the contents of this report.

### **Circulation under Local Alert Issues Procedure**

11. Mr M. Hunt CC, Mr P. Lewis CC, Mr J. Miah CC, Mrs E. Newton CC, Mr R. Sharp CC

### **Officers to Contact**

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## **PART B**

### **Scheme Background**

12. Department for Transport (DfT) funding for a Loughborough Inner Relief Road was secured in 2012 following submission and approval of a major scheme bid delivering an Inner Relief Road, town centre public realm improvements and Epinal Way improvements. The scheme had been subject to an extensive consultation in 2005/06 when a decision to run a one way bus trial through the Market Place was agreed. Work started in May 2013 on the inner relief road for Loughborough. The new road will enable general traffic to be removed from the existing A6 through the Market Place, allowing the area to become a more attractive pedestrian-friendly area.
13. An important aspect of the scheme was to consider whether buses should be allowed to travel through the Market Place once the town centre improvements are completed in autumn 2014. The County Council identified three possible options for bus movement:
- Option A - Two way bus operation
  - Option B - One way (southbound) bus operation
  - Option C - No bus access
14. All three options above would still retain access at certain times for delivery vehicles but generally all vehicles would be excluded between 10.00am and 4.00pm.
15. Cabinet agreed, in March 2013, to a further consultation on allowing buses through a pedestrianised Market Place.

### **What are the issues?**

16. The main issues that have been considered are as follows:
- a) Access for buses to provide predictable journey times for cross town and cross Loughborough services and maintain current service levels provided by the commercial sector. Buses bring around 6,000 passengers into Loughborough town centre every weekday.
  - b) Access for delivery vehicles to service businesses.
  - c) Pedestrianisation (with access for service vehicles between 4.00pm and 10.00am) to allow enhanced use of the newly created public space by removal of general traffic (only 95+% of traffic removed if buses allowed through) with a potential offer to attract more visitors to Loughborough and increase economic activity.

### **Consultation process**

17. The consultation considered the three options of:
- Option A - Two way bus operation
  - Option B - One way (southbound) bus operation

- Option C - No bus access

18. The consultation ran in late 2013 and closed on 8th December 2013. Responses could be provided in writing, on line, at meetings and during a public exhibition event at Loughborough Town Hall. The exhibition was held from Thursday 21st November through to Saturday 23rd November 2013 and given prominent coverage in the local media. A copy of the consultation is attached at Appendix A.
19. The exhibition was staffed by County Council officers and a representative of Ringway, in addition representatives of the local bus companies and Loughborough Pedestrians First were formally in attendance and able to make their views known to visitors to the exhibition.
20. The event was also attended by a Mr David Walker, a former borough councillor, to promote his own option which is commonly referred to as the Walker loop and/or option C+, a reworking of option C above.
21. A number of visitors to the exhibition requested to sign up to option C or C+ as a consultation response on entering the exhibition, without any reference to the information on display or conversations with staff at the event.
22. The exhibition was visited by 175 visitors on Thursday, 158 on Friday and 171 on Saturday. The event was visited by all local County Councillors and the local MP, Nicky Morgan.
23. Officers and local members attended three Loughborough Area Forum meetings along with meetings with local interest groups.

### **Consultation - High Level Result Analysis**

24. A total of 1,311 questionnaire responses were received, 843 of these were submitted online and 468 in paper format of which 321 were received by post and 147 completed at the exhibition. A further 45 general responses received in written or email form. A detailed analysis of the full consultation results is given in appendix B along with bus route maps and responses from key stakeholders and Pedestrians First.
25. A detailed profile of the respondents is given below:

		<b>Number</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
Capacity of response	Individual	1,158	88.3%
	Business	71	5.4%
	Other	31	2.4%
	Did Not Say	51	3.9%
Main mode of travel into town centre	Bus or Coach	618	47.1%
	Car or Van	350	26.7%
	On Foot	236	18%
	Bicycle	66	5%
	Other	20	1.5%
	Did Not Say	21	1.6%

Frequency of visits to town centre	Daily	399	30.4%
	At Least Twice Per-Week	580	44.2%
	Weekly	182	13.9%
	Less Than Weekly	127	9.7%
	Never	1	
	Did Not Say	22	1.7%
Usual reason for visiting town centre	Shopping/Access to Services	932	71.1%
	Work/Business	239	18.2%
	Leisure/Tourism	67	5.1%
	Other	49	3.4%
	Did Not Say	24	1.8%
Gender	Male	730	55.7%
	Female	541	41.3%
	Did Not Say	40	3.1%
Long standing illness or disability	Yes	231	17.6%
	No	1004	76.6%
	Did Not Say	76	5.8%
Age	Under 25	96	7.3%
	25-44	241	18.4%
	45-64	419	32%
	Over 65	493	39.1%
	Did Not Say	42	3.2%
Ethnicity	White	1165	88.9%
	All Other	41	3.1%
	Did not Say	105	8%

26. At 57.5% the results show an overall majority in support of full pedestrianisation with no buses allowed through the Market Place.

27. This reflected the views of Nicky Morgan MP, Loughborough County Councillors, Charnwood Borough Council and the Loughborough BID.

28. Local bus companies supported the two way bus option A as did 38% of respondents to the consultation (38.2% of respondents would support/accept Option A).

29. Members are also reminded that a 520 signature petition against allowing buses through the Market Place was presented to the Cabinet on the 6 March 2013 with a request that it was considered as part of any future consultation exercise.

30. It is interesting to note that although there was a higher response rate to the current consultation, the results closely align with those of the 2006 consultation prior to the decision to agree a trial of one way buses. In 2006, 816 responses were received with 56% in favour of full pedestrianisation and 30 % were in favour of one way buses through the market place with 14% no reply.

**31. Option A:**

- 501 responses expressed support for a trial of option A - 38.2% of responses.
- 463 responses said option A was their preferred option for a trial - 35.3% of responses.

## Specific comments:

- Maximises access to town centre for bus passengers – especially those with mobility difficulties (202 comments, of which 50 mentioned mobility issues)
- Maintains bus routes, frequencies and/or punctuality (107 comments)
- Good access for bus passengers important for town centre economy (55 comments)
- Promotes bus usage (28 comments)

**32. Option B**

- 139 responses expressed support for a trial of option B – 10.6% of responses
- 35 responses said option B was their preferred option for a trial – 2.7% of responses

## Specific comments:

- option B represents a good compromise between the interests of bus passengers and pedestrians

**33. Option C**

- 754 responses expressed support for a trial of option C – 57.5% of responses
- 715 responses said option C was their preferred option for a trial – 54.5% of responses

## Specific comments:

- Pedestrianisation is a good thing in itself (340 comments). This figure includes more specific comments that only option C would be consistent with the notion of pedestrianisation (194 comments) and that only full pedestrianisation would justify the cost and disruption associated with the scheme (26 comments)
- Safest for pedestrians (228 comments)
- Impact on bus services and passengers not excessive (86 comments). This figure includes more specific comments about proposed locations/proximity of bus stops to the town centre (53 comments) and the significance/impact of the diversion routes (33 comments)
- Maximises enhancement of the public realm and/or creates new space for events and displays (75 comments)
- Easier for pedestrians to travel between the northern and southern parts of the town centre (57 comments)
- Minimises vehicle emissions and noise in the Market Place (55 comments)
- Beneficial for the local economy (14 comments)

**34. Option C+**

35. Many people who supported option C also expressed support for the alternative “Option C+” proposal although this was not formally part of the consultation. This alternative proposal was that all buses should serve an expanded hub on High Street

and Baxter Gate. This would require southbound buses to loop back on themselves, and some services to divert from the opposite side of the town centre.

36. This option was promoted heavily by its author, Mr David Walker, before and during the consultation as a viable alteration to option C.
37. The key trends in the consultation responses are highlighted below
- a) Majority of bus users who responded favour Option A. Other modes are more in line with the overall results favouring option C, with car users especially supportive (over 70%).
  - b) Majority of respondents who visit weekly or more often favour option C, though daily visitors are noticeably more finely split between A and C.
  - c) Majority of respondents accessing the town centre for shopping/services and work/business favour option C, though work/business visitors are noticeably more finely split between A and C.
  - d) Business respondents more likely to support option C (approximate margin 2:1 vs option A) than respondents as a whole.
  - e) Respondents identifying themselves as having a disability or illness are split almost half and half between options A and C, whereas other respondents are more in line with the overall results favouring option C.
  - f) Majority of younger people (under 45s) support option A, whereas older people (over 45) are more in line with the overall results favouring option C.
38. Formal written responses received from (option preference where stated):
- Arriva Midlands (option A)
  - Charnwood Borough Council (option C)
  - Confederation of Passenger Transport East Midlands (option A)
  - East Midlands Airport
  - Hastings Community Association (option C)
  - Kinchbus (option A)
  - Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce (option C)
  - Loughborough BID (option C/C+)
  - Loughborough Town Team (option C/C+)
  - Market Traders
  - Mary Portas (option C)
  - Matthew O'Callaghan (option C)
  - Nicky Morgan MP (option C)
  - Roberts Coaches
  - Sileby Parish Council (option C)
  - Storer and Ashby Residents Group (option C/C+)
  - Woodhouse Parish Council
39. Loughborough BID has produced a vision document to support a fully pedestrianised town centre. This is attached at Appendix E and the main points are the delivery of an enhanced offer for the town centre to promote and market a unique public space with a range of activities and events which will tie the two halves of the town centre together, spread trade and footfall.
40. Mary Portas, as part of her support for Loughborough BID and the Town Team, sent an open letter to Loughborough stakeholders. A copy of her exchange with the Managing Director of TrentBarton who operate Kinchbus is attached at Appendix G.



41. Loughborough Town Team representing town centre businesses on Church Gate, Baxter Gate, Wards End, Bedford Square have collected 66 signatures calling on the Cabinet 'to agree the implementation for a trial period of a solution based on "Option C" from its recent public consultation – no buses allowed through the Market Place and appropriate alternative routes provided for bus services. We believe that this solution will bring the biggest benefit and success and vitality of Loughborough town centre and the businesses within it. Trialling Option C will enable firm evidence to be collected about the impact on bus services and about the impact on footfall and business.'
42. Pedestrians First have set up a Facebook page and are committed to campaigning for a new public space in the heart of the town to provide:
- Vehicle free environment
  - Safer environment as any pedestrian/vehicle conflict removed
  - Opportunity to run events in that public space
  - Delivery of a café culture
  - Live entertainment and a big screen
43. Bus passengers have responded and some clear views emerged as follows:
- Impact on convenience of bus services if pushed to the edge of the town centre – especially for bus users who are disabled or have limited mobility.
  - Impact on journey times if bus services are forced to divert around the inner relief road.
44. Bus companies have responded that through and cross town services should continue to use Market Place and Swan Street to allow exiting frequencies and routes to be retained. The bus companies have agreed to operating restrictions through the shared space area.
45. Action for a Better Charnwood (ABC) could not agree a consensus on how to respond and did not submit a consultation response although individual members did submit responses.
46. General comments on response forms included:
- Loughborough needs a bus station (108 comments)
  - Baxter Gate should be made two-way for buses as part of option C (19 comments)
  - Cycling arrangements in the town centre should be reviewed (16 comments) – NB this figure includes responses in favour of greater restrictions on cycling, fewer restrictions and/or provision of additional cycling facilities.

### **What are the benefits/disbenefits of the options?**

#### **Two way bus access (option A) - Impact assessment**

##### **47. Bus services and passengers**

- a) Both north and southbound buses would travel through the Market Place in single file (i.e. in one direction at a time) at walking pace.
- b) Loughborough's bus network would continue unchanged, using existing routes and serving bus stops very close to the town centre.

- c) Bus journeys through the town centre would be free from delays caused by using a longer diverted route.
- d) Local bus services would be attractive to passengers by offering close access to the town centre.

#### 48. Pedestrians

- a) Existing conflict between vehicles and pedestrians would be significantly reduced, as almost all current through traffic would be moved to the inner relief road.
- b) Based on current service patterns, 49 buses per-hour would continue to pass through the Market Place (northbound or southbound); less than one bus a minute.

#### 49. Pollution and congestion

- a) Reduced exhaust emissions and noise in the Market Place as traffic levels significantly reduced.

#### 50. Safety

- a) There is a perception that shared space between vehicles and pedestrians is unsafe, however, although a relatively new traffic management concept within the UK, there are many examples of shared space within other towns and cities and it is considered that with appropriate restrictions agreed with the bus operators that the option could be safely operated.
- b) It should be noted that compared to the current situation pedestrian vehicle conflicts would be significantly reduced.
- c) No need for bus passengers to cross the new Inner Relief Road

### **One way bus access (option B) - Impact assessment**

#### 51. Bus services and passengers

- a) Southbound buses would travel through the Market Place at walking pace.
- b) Northbound local bus services which currently travel through the Market Place would be routed along Baxter Gate, Lemyngton Street, Fennel Street and Bridge Street.
- c) Northbound bus services would travel further due to this diversion; which would make local bus services less attractive.
- d) To compensate for any additional time on the diversion route, northbound bus services would not use bus stops on The Rushes and Derby Square.
- e) Less conveniently located bus stops may mean fewer passengers use local bus services to access the town centre.
- f) Viability of Loughborough's current bus network may be affected and services might reduce in frequency.
- g) Fares might increase and/or routes might be cut back in other areas.

#### 52. Pedestrians

- a) Existing conflict between vehicles and pedestrians would be significantly reduced.
- b) Based on current service patterns, 29 buses per-hour would continue to travel southbound through Market Place; one bus every two minutes.

#### 53. Pollution and congestion

- a) Reduced exhaust emissions and noise in the Market
- b) Place as traffic levels significantly reduced.

- c) Additional bus services using Baxter Gate could lead to traffic delays at the inner relief road junction.

#### 54. Safety

- a) There is a perception that shared space between vehicles and pedestrians is unsafe, however, although a relatively new traffic management concept within the UK, there are many examples of shared space within other towns and cities and it is considered that with appropriate restrictions agreed with the bus operators that the option could be safely operated.
- b) It should be noted that compared to the current situation pedestrian vehicle conflicts would be significantly reduced.
- c) No need for bus passengers to cross the new Inner Relief Road

### **Full pedestrianisation (option C) - Impact assessment**

#### 55. Bus services and passengers

- a) Market Place fully pedestrianised, with no buses travelling through Swan Street. All local bus services would be rerouted.
- b) Local bus services would have to travel further to continue providing the same level of service to the town centre.
- c) Longer distance through town bus services would be likely to serve one bus stop in the town centre each way. Northbound stops would be on High Street/Baxter Gate and southbound stops would be on Fennel Street/Lemyngton Street.
- d) Town services which currently operate through the town centre may have to be split, with revised services terminating in the town centre. This would provide good access to the town centre, with bus stops on High Street and Baxter Gate to the south and The Rushes and Derby Square to the north, but would cause existing cross-town bus links to be broken. This would mean a break in the journey and a walk between connecting services.
- e) Passengers would have to walk further and cross the inner relief road to reach the new southbound stops.
- f) Possible reductions in service frequency and increases in fares if longer routes, avoiding the Market Place, cannot be accommodated in current timetable cycles.
- g) Some neighbourhoods could lose their local bus services due to route alterations, designed to recover time lost through diversions.
- h) Potential reduction in the number of passengers using services to access the town centre, which may affect the long-term viability of Loughborough's current bus network.

#### 56. Pedestrians

- a) No conflict between buses and pedestrians through Market Place although delivery and service vehicles would still be allowed to access the Market Place after 4.00pm and before 10.am.

#### 57. Pollution and congestion

- a) Exhaust emissions in the Market Place mostly eliminated due to the routing of all general traffic and buses on to the inner relief road.
- b) Additional bus services using Baxter Gate could lead to traffic delays at the junction with the inner relief road.

58. Safety

- a) Pedestrian and vehicle conflicts would be removed with the exception of service vehicles
- b) Bus passengers would need to cross the new Inner Relief Road to access southbound buses.

**The Walker Loop/Option C+**

59. The three public consultation options are discussed above. Just before the consultation began the idea of the 'Walker Loop' was suggested as an alternative to the three consultation options. The 'Walker Loop' or the C+ option received a lot of media reporting and leaflets were distributed to explain the concept to consultees.

60. The C+ option is designed to take northbound buses along High Street, Baxter Gate, Lemyngton Street, Fennel Street and Bridge Street, The Rushes and then to northbound routes which is similar to Option C. Southbound buses would follow a reverse of this route to Lemyngton Street and then operate along the new Inner Relief Road and then to High Street and Baxter Gate before returning onto the new Inner Relief Road and turning southbound onto Leicester Road or westbound onto Southfield Road, effectively operating a double loop of the Inner Relief Road. The option was promoted as only taking one or two minutes longer than the route via the Market Place (Option A). A copy of the leaflet is attached at appendix B.

61. C+, as an option, was considered by officers in the very early days of the Inner Relief Road thinking in 2005 and again in 2012/early 2013 when funding was confirmed. The option was ruled out in discussion with bus companies for the following reasons:

- a) Excessive time for diversion around the Inner Relief Road - the Inner Relief Road will take all displaced traffic from the Market Place A6. There are 4 additional traffic signal junctions and 4 light controlled pedestrian crossings along the route compared to Option A and this reduces to 3 and 3 compared to Option C. Additional running times of 4 minutes northbound and 8 minutes southbound are estimated by Arriva but further detailed analysis is required to test this.
- b) Displacement of bus stops away from traditional bus routes - bus companies will not be able to service bus stops at both ends of the town centre without cutting route mileage elsewhere, reducing frequencies or increasing vehicle resource. This will displace through bus route stops onto Lemyngton Street and Fennel Street and on the High Street/Baxter Gate loop. Cross town bus service links will continue with additional time and mileage. Kinchbus have suggested that Option C will mean these through services would be delinked and operationally independent routes will run on routes in the north and south of the urban area of Loughborough. It is difficult to suggest that C+ would provide through services based on the Kinchbus response.
- c) Additional time spent on bus for bus passengers – Most routes will not serve the Rushes/Derby Square and so the first opportunity for passengers approaching from the north to alight near the town centre will be at new stops on Lemyngton Street, which would be further away from the Market Place than the existing stops. Passengers will also have the option of alighting on High Street or Baxter Gate, but this could prove unattractive as it would involve staying on the bus for longer whilst it doubles back into the town centre via the 'Walker Loop' on the C+ option. Either way, the experience for passengers will be worse and will make bus travel less attractive.

- d) Fuel consumption for additional mileage - with the frequencies involved there will be an impact on bus operating costs.
- e) Bus stop congestion/lack of kerb space on High Street/Baxter Gate - current thinking suggests that recovery and boarding times in the town centre allow for 6 buses per-hour at each bus stop. Under Option C+ there would be around 60 buses per hour using the High Street and Baxter Gate. This indicates a minimum of 10 bus stops would be needed. There is not sufficient kerb space to site 10 stops without removing all other kerbside facilities including delivery bays and taxi ranks.

62. The above concerns suggest that the operation of a C+ solution is not deliverable without causing significant inconvenience to bus passengers and businesses on High Street and Baxter Gate.

63. Loughborough BID had fully supported the C+ option believing that it will resolve the debate around bus access versus full pedestrianisation. Following further discussions on the above concerns with Loughborough BID they no longer support for this option.

64. The local bus companies have indicated that they will have to alter the pattern of services to address any eventually agreed solution if this excludes buses from the Market Place. In fact Kinchbus and Arriva have explicitly said they will not implement option C+ and given that public transport services are deregulated and the limited public sector funding available to support public transport services it is difficult to see how this option could be delivered.

### **The impact of buses in the Market Place**

65. At walking pace a bus will have a travel time of 50 seconds through the two way single carriageway in the Market Place. With the length of a bus waiting to go southbound the 80 metre single track will be extended by 10 metres. If a bus waiting there 50% of the time then the average through time becomes  $47\frac{1}{2}$  seconds for 90 metres (the bus travels 10 metres every  $5\frac{1}{2}$  seconds).

66. Comparing the existing position with the bus trial there is currently a Puffin crossing at the Market Place which operates with up to 26 second wait depending on traffic flows along the A6, if there is a natural break in traffic flow the green pedestrian phase is brought forward. The crossing phase is then dependent on numbers of pedestrians crossing but only to a maximum of 26 seconds then with light change sequences. At most a crossing phase is likely to be available for around 43% of the time.

67. In a two way bus trial we have up to 49 buses per hour which would suggest that the road is only available to cross for 35% of the time ( $[3,600 - 49 \times 47\frac{1}{2}] / 3600$  seconds) for crossing. However this assumes that no one will cross whilst there is a bus within the strip. The reality is that there is a window of 17 seconds (20 metres in front of the bus and 10 metres of bus) where the strip would not be able to be crossed. This means that the actual time the road is available to cross is 77% of the time ( $[3,600 - 49 \times 17] / 3600$ ). Experience where buses share space with pedestrians, for example Blakett Street in Newcastle, is that rather than wait pedestrian will alter direction to cross behind the bus but walk parallel with the bus whilst it passes through the shared space.

### **How would a trial be tested?**

68. Any trial would need to be tested against the following criteria: Safety, Ease of Movement, Public Realm, Bus Services, Economy and Environment. A draft approach to measuring these areas is included in Appendix C.
69. General before and after surveys are planned. Before surveys have been conducted recently.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

70. All of the options consulted on are deliverable with the works currently underway in the town centre. The options deliver different benefits as described in the impact assessments above. A summary of the benefits and dis-benefits of the three options are:

#### Option A - two way buses

- More reliability and punctuality of bus services
- 95% of traffic removed
- Better sited bus stops for passengers arriving in the town centre
- Not complete pedestrianisation
- Access for loading needed daily at certain times
- Perceived as a less safe option

#### Option B - one way buses (southbound)

- 95% of traffic removed
- Better sited stops for passengers arriving in the town centre
- Still better reliability for bus services as southbound route avoids new Inner relief road
- Northbound cross town and through bus services will suffer delays using the new Inner Relief Road
- Not complete pedestrianisation
- Access for loading needed daily at certain times
- Perceived as a less safe option

#### Option C - no buses

- Perceived as the safer option
- 100% of traffic removed between 10.00am and 4.00pm daily
- Complete pedestrianisation between 10.00am and 4.00pm daily
- The ability to use the area for an unlimited number of events between 10.00am and 4.00pm without the need for additional temporary road closures
- Access for loading needed daily at certain times
- Punctuality and reliability of services will be impacted resulting in rerouted and cross town links being broken.
- Less convenient bus stop facilities on the Inner Relief Road needed close to Churchgate.

- Southbound bus users have to cross the Inner Relief Road.

71. The C+ option is not considered to be deliverable and has many drawbacks, not least the fact that as most of the services in Loughborough are commercially operated and the operators have stated in their response to the consultation that they would not commercially operate it, and given the current financial situation the County Council would not be in a position to operate this option as a subsidised route..
72. Loughborough residents, businesses and visitors have been given the opportunity to give their feedback on the suggested options.
73. There are clearly strong views expressed either way in this consultation with a majority favouring no bus access but a significant number of people also support allowing buses.
74. It is clear that to the majority of respondents the option of no buses is perceived to be safer and better for the economy of Loughborough than the option of allowing buses through on a trial basis and that those respondents are convinced that the risk of reduced bus services and poorer access to the town with its potential economic dis-benefits is unlikely to occur and is outweighed by the potential to have a fully pedestrianised town centre and the ability to attract new footfall from this approach. However, there is a significant minority that support the trial of allowing buses through the town centre.
75. The vision put forward by the stakeholders supporting the no bus option is a compelling one of a unique public space which can be used to promote, market and accommodate a range of activities and events which will tie the two halves of the town centre together, spread trade and footfall.
76. Conversely the implications for the commercial bus services put forward by the operators and the effects on bus users and patronage levels are equally compelling.
77. In coming to a recommendation to Cabinet, officers have had to balance the results of the consultation and the conflicting views and evidence which have emerged,
78. It is considered that any of the Options could be delivered safely and that the decision comes down to a balance between the potential dis-benefits to bus users versus the potential additional economic benefits of removing buses from the Town Centre.
79. Whilst the vision and aspiration of those supporting Option C is understandable, it is considered that this is not fully deliverable within the current design as many of these events may only be possible with a totally traffic free environment which would mean a reassessment of the servicing arrangements for this area. This would only be possible following the completion of the trial and once the outcome of any potential public inquiry was known.
80. The risks highlighted in the bus companies submission are real and significant and that these would lead to bus travel within Loughborough becoming a less attractive option with a subsequent decline in patronage and commercial viability with the knock on effect to the economy of the town centre, furthermore it is considered that the operators will split the cross town routes as detailed in their response to the consultation.

81. In the professional opinion of officers the risks to the commercial bus networks and potential loss of cross town services cannot be justified by the likely extra over economic activity that may accrue from the removal of 50 buses per hour as the area may still not be available for many of the potential events envisaged due to the presence of service vehicles through the area.
82. The debate is not about the removal of general traffic as this will be displaced to the Inner Relief Road when it opens. The debate is around up to 50 buses per hour travelling at walking pace through the Market Place as opposed to no buses. Delivery vehicles will still be allowed into the area at certain times. Emergency vehicles will still have access at all times.
83. On balance it is considered that the lowest risk approach would be to proceed with a trial of Option A through the implementation of an 18 month experimental traffic regulation order to allow for the proposed shared space option to be fully evaluated. At the same time it should be recognised that there is a strong local opinion in favour of Option C and it is considered that those supporting this option have understood and assessed the risks in coming to their conclusions.
84. It should be noted that whichever option is taken forward the scheme will need to be designed to allow for buses. Should a trial of Option C proceed and the bus companies maintain their objections to this option then there would be a statutory requirement to hold a public inquiry prior to confirming the final form of the traffic order.

### **Way Forward**

85. In considering all the issues and consultation responses arising, the preferred option that Cabinet is recommended to approve is Option A - to run a trial allowing buses through the Market Place/Swan Street to assess the use of the shared space and minimise the risks associated to changes within the commercial bus network which could have a detrimental impact the commercial viability of services and lead to reduced levels of patronage and dis-benefits to bus users..

### **Background Papers**

Report to Cabinet - 6 March 2013

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=3630&Ver=4> (Minute 624 refers)

Report to Cabinet - 7 March 2006

[http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/C00000135/M00001407/AI00012767/\\$TransportProposalsforCentralLoughborough.doc.pdf](http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/C00000135/M00001407/AI00012767/$TransportProposalsforCentralLoughborough.doc.pdf)

Loughborough Town Centre Consultation Report – March 2006

[http://www.leics.gov.uk/consultation\\_report.pdf](http://www.leics.gov.uk/consultation_report.pdf)

Report to Cabinet - 23 November 2007

[http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/C00000135/M00001973/AI00017857/\\$ItemKTransportProposals.doc.pdf](http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/C00000135/M00001973/AI00017857/$ItemKTransportProposals.doc.pdf)

### **List of Appendices**

- a) Consultation leaflet
- b) Consultation report



- c) Assessment criteria for trial of options A, B or C
- d) Impact on bus routes
- e) Loughborough BID report
- f) Loughborough Pedestrians First
- g) Mary Portas open letter and Jeff Counsell response
- h) Equalities Questionnaire

### **Relevant Impact Assessments**

#### **Equal Opportunities Implications**

In options A and B some pedestrians with mobility, hearing and sight impairments may be impacted by bus access. Bus passengers will continue to have close access to Loughborough town centre.

In option C some pedestrians with mobility, hearing and sight impairments may find a pedestrianised area easier to access. Bus passengers alighting or catching through southbound buses will be further away from the town centre. Cross town bus services will be severed resulting in any through northbound passengers with mobility difficulties or other disabilities having to alight in High Street/Baxter Gate and walk through to bus stops on The Rushes. The reverse interchange would be required for passengers with disabilities making southbound journeys. Those on low incomes may be adversely affected if they have to pay for additional journeys caused by severance of the town bus routes.

From the consultation responses those who identified themselves as having a disability were evenly split on their preference for allowing buses through, or removing buses from, Market Place and Swan Street suggesting that the impacts any of the options are overall neutral

The Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) undertaken for the Loughborough Inner Relief Road is attached at Appendix H.

#### **Environmental Impact**

The full environmental impacts of the overall Loughborough scheme are contained within the major scheme business case (August 2007) which can be viewed at [http://www.leics.gov.uk/master\\_final\\_5.2\\_p\\_amended.pdf](http://www.leics.gov.uk/master_final_5.2_p_amended.pdf). The difference in environmental benefits between all options is not considered to be significant when set against the overall environmental benefits which will be achieved by the overall scheme.

However, Option C would provide the highest level of environmental benefits for Market Street as it removes all traffic with the exception of delivery and service vehicles and would minimise severance for pedestrians within the market place, however, this needs to be considered against the potential additional congestion caused by bus stops on the

Inner Relief Road and the additional severance for some southbound bus users in having to cross the Inner Relief Road.

### **Risk Assessment**

The risks associated with these options are discussed within the report and in summary there is a significant risk that the changes to the public transport network within Loughborough arising from the prohibition of buses on Market street and Swan Street would potentially disadvantage bus users, which would lead to a reduction in bus patronage and lead to a reduction in economic activity for the town from bus users, furthermore the response from the bus companies suggest that the cross town services would be severed leading to more difficult cross town bus journeys. On balance it is considered that these dis-benefits are not outweighed by the potential additional economic benefit arising from the implementation of option C which would provide a traffic free public space for 6 hours per day.