

The Case for Trialling Option C

General Context

We are a Portas Town

We are a pilot set up by the Government to trial new ideas to help town centre regeneration. We are one of 27 towns, out of 420 that applied to get this status. The Minister for DCLG announced from the stage in Loughborough Town Hall that, 'Portas Pilots have exceptional permission to do exceptional things.' This policy is central to the Government's initiative to help regenerate town centres. We must not miss the opportunity to trial full pedestrianisation in Loughborough.

Mary Portas told us that our greatest asset is the market place – full pedestrianisation will enable us to make full use of it.

Town Centres need to change

The Portas Review and Bill Grimsey Review both stressed the need for town centres to become destinations for the widest cross section of the community. We have far more scope to bring in other uses for the town centre and attract more people through full pedestrianisation.

The need for regeneration

Vacancy rates are 13%. Online broadband is going out to the rural areas and it is getting faster and faster – mass online distributors have also massively upped their game. National retailers are continuing to reduce their number of stores. Independent businesses are struggling. Something needs to change – the removal of cars is not enough to make the difference – we need to trial full pedestrianisation, which has the opportunity to be game-changing.

Town centre businesses have had to contend with significant disruption to their businesses over 2 years, at a very bad time for the economy – this hardship has been recognised by the Valuation Office. What was all this for if there is not a material benefit? We do not believe that there will be sufficient impact from the IRR if buses are still permitted to travel through the centre.

Compelling evidence to support our case

There is compelling evidence from a number of studies that full pedestrianisation brings measurable economic benefits in terms of footfall, trade, turnover, as well as qualitative benefits in terms of public perceptions and enjoyment. We submit summaries from:

- Ecotec Study for Emda of the Economic Benefits of the Public Realm with East Midlands examples.
- Aberdeen
- Taunton
- Toronto

Oxford and Exeter were cited as good examples of buses running through pedestrian areas. These examples are completely different – the pedestrians predominantly walk in the direction of bus travel, not against it. Reference should be made to the research submitted by Pedestrians First, which also highlighted the significant percentage of wheelchair users and people with push chairs crossing the A6. Please note that it is now proposed that buses should be prevented from travelling through Queen Street in Oxford – this is supported by Ian Hudspeth, the leader of the County Council.

The Hinckley proposals are also completely different to Loughborough and do not bear comparison.

Need to protect the diversity of our offer in Loughborough

Church Gate is an area with a high concentration of independent businesses and it is really struggling – reduced footfall, reduced trade and increased vacancy. It has been identified that town centres need diversity in the offer – we will only go one way if the offer becomes too concentrated. We are concerned that this area could fail – full pedestrianisation is our best chance of bringing in the spending power from the wealthy surrounding villages. The BID commissioned an Independent report from CACI, which confirmed that Loughborough is in an excellent position to attract additional business from these areas. Many people are calling for smaller specialist independent retailers, but a critical mass of such outlets is needed to attract browsers – Church Gate has the charm to do this but it needs a significant increase in footfall to survive. This will only be achieved through maximising the benefits of pedestrianisation – making the town centre more attractive, having the information hub on Biggin Street and encouraging footfall to spread from the town centre.

95% support from the people who have most to lose

Businesses have the most to lose should full pedestrianisation fail.

The BID represents 600 town centre businesses. 21 of the 22 Businesses on the BID Board voted to support full pedestrianisation (95%).

Please refer to the submitted petition signed by 95% of independent business on Church Gate and Baxter Gate, which have a great deal to gain from the free flow of pedestrians across the town centre.

Please also refer to the petition signed by 95% of independent businesses in Devonshire Square, Wards End and Bedford Square, showing that all businesses, not just those in the

direct vicinity support full pedestrianisation – we all want more events in a more attractive centre, encouraging greater footfall.

Full support from the wider community

Option C is the clear preferred choice in the County Council consultation (55%). This was despite the Kinch 'save our stops campaign', which gave people the impression that the stops in Market Place and on Swan Street could be saved under options A or B – they clearly go under all options.

Pedestrianisation is supported by:

Charnwood Borough Council

Nicky Morgan MP

Loughborough Chamber of Commerce (unanimous vote)

The Federation of Small Businesses

The Town Team (unanimous support for option C, following a presentation by the bus companies)

Love Loughborough Partnership

Citygrove (developing the old hospital site on Baxter Gate in to a cinema/restaurant complex)

Klaus Kaiser (landowner of a significant redevelopment site on the inside of the new IRR)

Pedestrians First

SARG

We are aware that David Walker has been criticised for being over-zealous at the bus consultation, but most independent commentators that have expressed a view of the overall experience of visiting the consultation, was that it heavily favoured the bus company position. Initially, representation of the substantial 'no' campaign was not to be allowed at the public consultation – there was little time to prepare when this decision was reversed. David is a respected figure in the Town having lived here for many years, being an academic with relevant experience and a bus user.

Considered input from a Retail Expert, who knows Loughborough better than most people

Kerching were commissioned by the BID to conduct a thorough examination of the Town Centre Offer. They undertook a review of every business in the town centre. They are giving one-to-one training to businesses under the Portas initiative and providing Retail Master

Classes. They strongly recommend full pedestrianisation. Reference should be made to their submission.

We are in no way anti-bus – we are working to increase bus use

The BID has worked effectively with the bus operators on promotions to encourage more people to come in to town on the buses. We have spent £261,000 in 2 years to encourage more people to come in to town on the buses (Summer Love Bus Campaign, Fab Fridays, Freshers etc.).

We urge the bus companies to accept that the weight of public opinion is overwhelmingly in support of full pedestrianisation - we hope that they will work with us all to make this a success. We all want more people coming in on the buses. We have a preference for the Walker Loop but we are prepared to work with the bus companies to explore all potential options – our interests are very much aligned.

A high profile town centre re-launch and the start of an exciting event programme

With full pedestrianisation, the BID will spend £120,000 on a re-launch of the ‘new look’ Town Centre, working closely with the County Council’s LSTF. We need to win back business that has been lost to other areas as a result of the road works – pedestrianisation will give us this opportunity.

We will make full use of the fully pedestrianised area to attract more people in to Town. Reference should be made to the submitted event programme. The BID team has demonstrated that it is capable of delivering successful events in conjunction with the Borough Council and other stakeholders.

Option C is the most popular option by far, the most pedestrian friendly, the option with the least congestion and the safest option

If you are looking to gather evidence from trialling options A or B, then you are simply looking to measure the number of accidents. One accident is too many, especially when County and the bus companies would be going against the wishes of so many Town stakeholders and going against the result of the consultation.

Bus traffic will be more dangerous in the evening when young people may be crossing the A6, having had a drink or two. There is a lot of footfall crossing the A6 between pubs/clubs on both sides of the Town, accessing buses, taxis and food establishments. Citygrove are building a cinema/restaurant complex on Baxter Gate, so this footfall will increase.

The BID should be supported

600 businesses in Loughborough Town Centre voted to establish a BID – one of the 3 successful BIDs out of 6 attempts in the East Midlands. The businesses pay 1.5% of their rateable value towards the BID improvement programme. This programme of

improvements is wide ranging, as can be seen from the submitted Action Plan. At the current rate of leverage secured through match funding, we forecast that the BID will spend in the region of £2,500,000 on town centre improvements over a 5 year period. BID businesses are hard-pressed and they are less likely to support the BID through increasing their fixed costs, if County fails to support the BID when it is clear that it has so much public support. We hope that all Town stakeholders, including the bus operators, will acknowledge the work that is being done and work with us, rather than against us.

We have waited for 30 years to join the two halves of the Town together

We currently have a fragmented town centre with the A6 cutting the town in to 2 halves. We have a fabulous one-off opportunity for game-changing regeneration, by joining these two halves together. Cabe commented:

“...As towns increasingly compete with one another to attract investment, the presence of good parks, squares, gardens and other public spaces becomes a vital business and marketing tool...”

We have the park – we hope you will let us have the square, at least as a trial.

There should not be any cut in bus services

A significant portion of bus users benefit from concessionary fares – they are unlikely to stop taking advantage of this service. We are able to show that the significant majority of bus services can be re-routed with little inconvenience to the public. We do not believe that journey times will be materially impacted for most services – certainly not enough to deter users. We have conducted a considerable amount of research in this area and we would happily share this with the bus companies to find the most favourable way forward under option C.

Bus travel along the A6 would be very slow under options A and B, to allow for pedestrians crossing and possible delays whilst bus drivers figure out whether it is safe to head through the pedestrianised area or not. We believe that the IRR will be free-flowing by comparison.

Buses will not even need to be re-routed during the week of the fair under option C.

There could be political consequences

Given the huge amount of support for option C from all stakeholders in Loughborough and the results of the consultation, there is likely to be a public backlash if the majority are ignored. Why have a consultation if the conclusion is not a significant factor in the final decision. Given that Loughborough is a Portas Pilot Town, this may well become a national issue.

We will not give up

Option C has so much backing, we will not give up. We would have graciously accepted another option if we had lost the consultation. In the circumstances, we would be compelled to counter any legal action that is considered by the bus companies.

The benefits of full pedestrianisation

- There is compelling evidence from a number of studies that full pedestrianisation brings measurable economic benefits in terms of footfall, trade, turnover etc. as well as qualitative benefits in terms of public perceptions and enjoyment
- We submit summaries from
 - Ecotec Study for emda of the Economic Benefits of the Public Realm with East Midlands Examples
 - Aberdeen
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 - Toronto
- Oxford has recently decided to remove buses from the pedestrianized Queen Street. This decision appears to have the support of the business community and pedestrian groups.
- The evidence also suggests that the more radical the change, the bigger the benefits. The quality of the public realm and the strategic promotion and marketing of the opportunities are key
- The Toronto research found that pedestrianisation led to an increase in bus use across the towns and cities studied as well as improvements in turnover
- It must be the case that full pedestrianisation will produce a safer and more pedestrian-friendly environment
- Equally, only full pedestrianisation will allow the use of the whole Market Place for events and activities
- The BID's retail consultants, Kerching Retail Ltd have advised that there are significant benefits to the town of a fully pedestrianized Market Place (report attached)

The logic of trialling Option C

a) The County Council faces a difficult decision

- At the moment the County is faced by strong views from the business community in favour of full pedestrianisation and equally strong views from the bus companies in favour of buses going through. Businesses argue that footfall and trade will increase with full pedestrianisation and allow a re-launch of the town centre offer to the benefit of all. The bus companies argue that increased journey times will lead to higher operating costs and falling passenger numbers.

b) We need evidence

- The truth is that without firm evidence, neither side can prove its case. If Option C is trialled, the BID, the Councils and the business communities can carry out a full programme of town centre events and activities. We can accurately measure the impact of these on footfall. In

particular, the BID is installing in March five new automatic footfall counters that will provide hour by hour and 24/7 information including new counters in Market Place, across Church Gate/Biggin Street and across Baxter Gate which will show the scale of movement between the two halves of the town centre – one of the key objectives of the Town Centre Strategy. We will continue to measure vacancy rates and other key indicators as well as surveying businesses on trade and performance.

- At the same time, the bus companies will be able to provide real information about the impact of full pedestrianisation on bus journey times, bus use and service costs. In order to make things as easy as possible for the bus companies, we are suggesting that, for the trial, bus services simply use the Inner Relief Road for southbound services, with additional stops at Church Gate/Lemyngton Street. This will add only 272 metres to the main cross town or through route services. Northbound services will use High Street/Baxter Gate/ Inner Relief Road which will add only 357 metres.
- We had originally thought that the new southbound stops at Church Gate/Lemyngton Street might be a bit remote from the key destinations in the town centre. However, research carried out for the BID by Loughborough University Business School shows that the key consumer “touch points” or destinations in town are Primark/Top Shop in Market Place and Argos/Next in The Rushes Centre. We have compared the walking distances to these two destinations from the new bus stops at Church Gate/Lemyngton Street with those from the new stop on The Rushes and the existing stops on High Street (again, as shown in all three options). They are: from Church Gate/Lemyngton Street – 292m and 221m respectively; from The Rushes – 257m and 237m; and from High Street – 208m and 362m. In other words, there’s very little to choose between them. From our point of view it could be a good thing to draw more footfall along Church Gate and that side of the town centre. Northbound routes would use the stops on High Street and Baxter Gate, where the walking distances to the two destinations are 110m and 279m, and 193m and 353m respectively.
- This is the only way that the County Council can get the data and evidence necessary to make an informed final decision.
- There are other options which could be considered for the future or for the post-trial stage:
 - The Walker Loop
 - The Ashby Square/Derby Square Loop
 - Two way buses on Baxter Gate (no southbound stops)
 - Adjustments to routes or service frequencies

c) Option A is the status quo

- We believe there is no point in trialling Option A. In effect, it is the status quo option with buses operating much as they do now. Presumably the bus companies have all the information they require on this. Trialling Option A will give no new information to inform the bus debate. From the business point of view, though, it would prevent us from exploring the potential benefits of being able to market and promote a completely new programme of town centre activities and measuring their economic impact.

d) Option B is discredited

- We believe there is no case for trialling Option B. It is the compromise that no-one wants. The bus companies don’t want it, the business community doesn’t want it and in the recent consultation it was the preferred option of only 2.7% of the respondents compared with 35% for A and 55% for C

e) Conclusions

- The 2005 study by Atkins concluded that “increased journey distances may lead to increased bus journey times across the network. However, it is anticipated that speeds across the network will be higher with the introduction of the Inner Relief Road, and so any increase in journey time will not be proportionate to increase in distance.”
- Atkins also said “..... bus operators are likely to oppose any scheme to exclude them from Market Place. But there is a proviso to this, which is that they may be less inclined to oppose it if they can see that buses are still getting a ‘better deal’ than competing modes in terms of access to the town centre, and hence if their improved competitive position is likely to deliver the additional patronage required to counter the additional operating cost. Central to this are the proposals for regenerating Loughborough Town Centre”
- From a practical point of view, Option C will in effect be trialled from June to September anyway. The BID believes that from a public communication point of view it makes sense to continue that trial once all the works are complete.



February 2014

Opportunities arising from Full Pedestrianisation

Loughborough Town Centre

Working with various partner organisations, the BID aim to re-launch the 'new look' Loughborough Town Centre once the Inner Relief Road project is complete.

With full pedestrianisation we believe the town will have a great opportunity to really enhance its offer and bring extra footfall to the town.

As well as the obvious benefits such as lack of congestion and safety – we also believe that the extra space that will be gained will be valuable in offering enhanced cultural activities such as performances, art/sculpture and extended markets and events.

We currently have a fragmented town centre with the A6 cutting the town into two halves. Market Place has the highest footfall rate in the whole town centre – if buses continue to use this route then the situation will not change and the town will continue to be cut in half.

If it is pedestrianized, this issue will be eliminated as we can extend activities across the A6 and into Biggin Street – encouraging footfall across and into Church Gate and The Rushes Shopping Centre.

Church Gate in particular is a key area for the BID as it is experiencing major issues – reduced footfall, drop in trade and increased vacancy rates.

We also believe the Information Hub should be located in Biggin Street as an attraction to encourage people to flow over from Market Place.

Marketing Campaign

The town centre re-launch campaign will highlight Loughborough as a destination for shopping and leisure and will promote travel into the town across various sustainable transport modes, including buses, cycling, car sharing and walking.

Working closely with the County Council's LSTF, the campaign spend will be around £120,000 for June – December 2014.

The audience includes:

Loughborough residents, including students

Local Village residents

Visitors

We would use Charnwood Borough Council's Summer and Winter events programme as an incentive for people to travel into the town, along with information on the new road, new bus shelters/facilities, information hub, etc.

Summary of marketing communication vehicles include:

Love Loughborough, Leicestershire County Council and Charnwood Borough Council literature, including sponsoring of Loughborough bus map and guides, bus stop information displays

PR activity

Website and digital marketing

Outdoor advertising

Local press advertising

Radio advertising

Social media

Events

Direct mail

TIPs and other Distribution Points

Campaign includes monitoring throughout the promotion period through:

- bus patronage
- footfall
- voucher redemptions
- website hits
- social media reach
- any other suitable methods.

OPPORTUNITIES TO EXTEND CURRENT EVENTS

October 2014 – September 2015

October 2014

Fresher's Fair

Use of space: special market across and into Biggin Street

Current: Confined to Carillon Court and Market Place

Opportunity: Flow footfall across into Church Gate and The Rushes Shopping Centre

Anticipated footfall: 14,000 (average Friday is 11,000)

November 2014

Christmas Launch, 22nd November

Use of space: Stage and Gazebo across and into Biggin Street

Current: Mixed in with current market, not much space

Opportunity: Flow footfall across into Church Gate and The Rushes Shopping Centre. Space for 'event' buses

Anticipated footfall: 22,000 (average Saturday is 19,500)

Christmas Lights Switch On, 30th November

Use of space: Gem 106 Roadshow Stage and Big Screen, 'Loughborough Eye' big wheel, Ice skating rink across and into Biggin Street

Current: Smaller stage, stops at A6

Opportunity: Flow footfall across into Church Gate and The Rushes Shopping Centre. Even more usable space for the large crowds that are drawn to this event

Anticipated footfall: 15,000 (average Sunday 5,700)

December 2014

Santa Fun Run, 7th December

Use of space: Stage, performances, special market across and into Biggin Street

Current: Starts and finishes at University

Opportunity: Start and finish in Market Place, spectacle event, flow footfall across into Church Gate and The Rushes Shopping Centre

Anticipated footfall: 9,000 (average Sunday 5,700)

March 2015

Loughborough Half Marathon

Use of space: Stage, performances, special market across and into Biggin Street

Current: Smaller scale and confined to Market Place

Opportunity: Larger event, with footfall flow across into Church Gate and The Rushes Shopping Centre

Anticipated footfall: 8,000 (average Sunday is 5,700)

St Patricks Day and Mothering Sunday special markets/events

Use of space: Special markets and performances across and into Biggin Street

Current: Nothing

Opportunity: Flow footfall across into Church Gate and The Rushes Shopping Centre

Anticipated footfall: 7,000 (average Sunday is 5,700)

May 2015

Fabulous Fridays – from May through to August

Use of space: Early evening markets and performances across and into Biggin Street

Current: Nothing

Opportunity: Flow footfall across into Church Gate and The Rushes Shopping Centre

Anticipated footfall: 13,000 (average Friday is 11,000)

International Ceramics Market

Use of space: Extend across and into Biggin Street

Current: Stops at A6

Opportunity: Flow footfall across into Church Gate and The Rushes Shopping Centre

Anticipated footfall: 7,000 (average Sunday is 5,700)

June 2015

Classic Car Show

Use of space: Put cars on display across and into Biggin Street and Church Gate

Current: Stops at A6

Opportunity: Flow footfall across into Church Gate and The Rushes Shopping Centre

Anticipated footfall: 15,000 (average Sunday is 5,700)

Summer Sundays – from late June through to August July

Use of space: Performances/activities and special markets across and into Biggin Street

Current: A couple of events, and they stop at A6

Opportunity: Flow footfall across into Church Gate and The Rushes Shopping Centre

Anticipated footfall: 10,000 (average Sunday is 5,700)

July 2015

Race for Life

Use of space: Stage, performances, special market across and into Biggin Street

Current: 2014 is the first one – smaller scale and confined to Market Place

Opportunity: Larger event, with footfall flow across into Church Gate and The Rushes Shopping Centre

Anticipated footfall: 9,000 (average Sunday is 5,700)

August 2015

Loughborough by the Sea / Mela

Use of space: Extend the events with special markets and performances across and into Biggin Street

Current: Smaller and limited to Market Place

Opportunity: Larger event with footfall flow across into Church Gate and The Rushes Shopping Centre

Anticipated footfall: 8,000 (average Sunday is 5,700)

September 2015

Harvest/Farmers Market

Use of space: Extend markets and performances across and into Biggin Street

Current: Confined to Market Place

Opportunity: Flow footfall across into Church Gate and The Rushes Shopping Centre

Anticipated footfall: 13,000 (average Friday is 11,000)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW EVENTS

AND ACTIVITIES

The extra space created by pedestrianisation will free up more space in Market Place to enable improved lay out of events and markets, as well as offering huge potential for some ambitions, large scale events to really put Loughborough on the map. Activities could be educational, healthy and tie into local authority projects. It would also offer opportunities for 'child friendly' activities which would encourage more families to visit the town – a key audience for the BID:

- Special Markets – extended across into Biggin Street
- A 'Loughborough' Eye – Big Wheel located outside McDonalds
- Large Ice skating Rink – to attract schools/clubs into town
- Children's entertainment at the end of the market (eg Bouncy castles/games/ educational workshops)
- More space to make use of the current pedestrioanised area around the fountain – such as a traditional Big Wheel or Carousel
- Bike Hub/Roadshows – maintenance/education/area to teach children to ride bikes
- 'Win a Car' competition – with the car located outside McDonalds - sponsored by businesses
- Classic Bike Show – similar to the current Car Show but specifically for Bikes
- Children's Literacy Festival
- Temporary Art / Sculptures

- Temporary Heritage displays
- Artificial Grass area with deck chairs
- Artificial Beach
- Table Tennis / Volleyball / other sporting activity
- Future sporting events – including the use of a Big Screen:
 - Riding on the back of the hugely successful Olympics event – and in partnership with the University – we could plan large scale activity around future Olympics / Commonwealth Games
 - The Football World Cup
 - The Rugby World Cup

Address: Kerching House,
8 Alfrey Close,
Lutterworth,
Leicestershire,
LE17 4FH

Email: info@kerchingretail.com
Telephone: +44 7769 115366
Web: www.kerchingretail.com
Twitter: twitter.com/kerchingretail
Facebook: facebook.com/Kerchingretail



Jonathan Hale
Loughborough BID
Limehurst House,
Bridge Street
Loughborough
LE11 1NH

24th February 2014

Love Loughborough - Pedestrianisation Proposal

Dear Jonathan,

We have given consideration to the discussion of whether buses should be allowed to pass through the A6 Market Place, once the pedestrianisation work has been completed, and have a strong view that they should not.

Our opinion is based on research of Loughborough town centre summer 2013 and ongoing work in the town centre, with businesses likely to be affected by these changes. We have also performed desktop research to ascertain positive and negative impacts of 'full' pedestrianisation in other town centres.

Carfree¹ cites the characteristics of pedestrianisation as:

- ...much less traffic on surrounding roads.
- High rates of walking and cycling.
- More independent movement and active play amongst children.
- Less land taken for parking and roads - more available for green or social space.

The main benefits found for carfree developments:

- Low atmospheric emissions.
- Low road accident rates.
- Better built environment conditions.

As retail consultants specialising in town centres, we are primarily concerned with the impact on commerce for Loughborough town centre. Loughborough's primary competition comes from Leicester city centre, which is now fully pedestrianised and a safe and pleasant environment to shop. We anticipate full pedestrianisation of A6 Market Place having a positive affect on:

- Speed of pedestrians
- Dwell time
- Overall experience
- Potential for outside trading
- Safety of shoppers, particularly children and less mobile shoppers
- Linking a currently divided town centre

Although part pedestrianisation brings much of the aesthetic improvements, it fails to bring safety, experiential and outside trading benefits, which is disappointing given the economic benefits of these.

¹ <http://www.carfree.com>

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