

Divisions affected: *Bicester Town*

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT

25 APRIL 2024

BICESTER: SHEEP STREET – EXPERIMENTAL ORDER PERMITTING TWO-WAY CYCLING

Report by Corporate Director, Environment and Place

A further 7 responses to the initial consultation were passed to officers after the report had been prepared. Six of these object to the ETRO and 1 supports. This changes the total number of responses received to 17 with 11 objecting to the introduction of the ETRO; and 4 in support and 2 with mixed views.

The comments received below follow the same themes as those in the main report.

Addendum to Annex 3: Initial Consultation Responses

Respondent	Respondent Objections received to Initial ETRO Consultation
(1) Resident Larch Close Bicester	I strongly oppose allowing cycling in Sheep Street. It happens currently and I have had a few near misses in Bicester just walking on pavements or pedestrianised areas such as Sheep Street where you should not expected be mown down. I am 77, and not infirm, but many cyclists are reckless, and I find it scary and think pedestrian areas should be kept as such. There are some great cycle lanes around Bicester, just not there. No decision should be made on this without public consultation, please.
(2) Resident	I have been informed by Cllr. Donna Ford, that you are proposing to go ahead, WITHOUT public consultation of allowing cyclists through Sheep Street in Bicester. She states that 'despite calls on Oxfordshire County Council to hold a public consultation on cycling in Sheep Street you are still seeking to make a decision later this month on an ETRO (Experimental Traffic Regulation Order) , for 18 months without a public consultation in advance of change'- There will be chaos. It's an utter disgrace that you consider the Community's voice irrelevant or worthless.

	<p>I hope you have taken into consideration the disabled, Elderly, Blind with Guide Dogs, Parents with pushchairs & young Children.</p> <p>As well as the Market stalls on Friday that fill Sheep Street, Cafes that leave seating out, Large raised planted areas, Vehicles delivering/collecting goods and Blue Badge Holders, just to name just a few obstacles..</p> <p>Today if you confronted any cyclists for cycling in this 'Pedestrian Only Zone' the attitude from them is an absolute disgrace, the foul language, pushing and shoving AND you want to give them permission to do this!</p> <p>But it doesn't surprise me, If the Majority objected to this, you would still go ahead, citing that cyclists need a cycle route through Bicester. Where are these cyclists, why can't they use the roads, I'm sure they at least have passed a proficiency test one would hope.</p> <p>I've known first hand how you work, how the majority of people chose option one, leave Banbury Road Roundabout, and still you will go ahead and choose a ridiculous option, citing decisions previous Councillors made, Cyclist, Horse Riders and you know what? I've still not seen that great influx of cyclists, Horse riders you seem to have predicted to use the already laid routes. And the chaos you have caused to the community.. people will always drive.</p> <p>So please, just for once listen to the Local Community you serve and keep the 'Pedestrian Only Zone' free from cyclists in Sheep Street.</p>
(3) Resident	<p>I would like to record my opposition to this plan as an elderly person with mobility and hearing issues.</p> <p>Can you confirm that there will be a marked cycle lane and not just a free-for-all?</p> <p>How will this work on market day?</p> <p>Another stupid proposal and waste of our money by people who do not live here.</p>

<p>(4) Resident Linden Road, Bicester.</p>	<p>I was horrified to hear that this is even on the cards, and now I do need to lodge my objection to this move. I used to use my bike to get everywhere, although now I have a knee problem that has stopped me from getting on the bike.</p> <p>I have never thought that mixing pedestrians and bikes in the same area is a good thing. It introduces too many unknowns and can, and will, cause avoidable accidents.</p> <p>I now live in a building just behind Sheep Street. This building is full of people over 60 and many of them are frail and use walkers to get around. In essence, by introducing cyclists to the mix along Sheep Street, you will be putting them in danger, and they will simply not leave their flats if it means they stand a chance of being hit by someone on a bike. Only recently, I was walking in Sheep Street with my grandson. He decided to walk towards Sainsbury's and didn't notice a cyclist riding just in front of him. They almost collided. Believe me, with more people riding down there, you are going to have a lot more incidences like this. The whole idea of a pedestrianized area (which, if I am not mistaken, Sheep Street is) is that people should feel safe enough walking without having to watch out for cyclists.</p> <p>Besides, if those who have just got out of their cars to visit the shops in Sheep Street are forced to walk to them (instead of parking just outside) then surely a cyclist can get off his/her bike and walk down Sheep Street. I used to love cycling, but it would never occur to me to cycle down a busy thoroughfare.</p>
<p>(5) Resident, Maple Road, Bicester</p>	<p>Councillor Donna Ford has passed your email address on to me regarding the proposal to allow cyclists to use Sheep Street in Bicester. I have previously written to Councillor Ford with my concerns regarding this proposition - especially for it to be granted without prior consultation. I can remember when it was last suggested, around 2017, and was rejected after concerns were raised by local residents - including myself - and by Bicester councillors. The only support at that time came from cycling lobby groups, some national rather than local. I feel very strongly that the objections raised at that time (and at least there was consultation then and it was not imposed on us!) still stand.</p> <p>Sheep Street is a busy area and needs to be a safe and inviting environment for all - including the many elderly and disabled people, parents with children, and people with dogs who currently use it. Allowing cyclists to use it is incredibly dangerous as bikes are not only fast but silent. I feel that many people would find the change unpleasant at the least, with the atmosphere of the street changed, and for some people it would make using</p>

Sheep Street more frightening. Bike groups may say that it is a wide street but the street furniture, cafe seating, signage and regular market stalls means that pedestrians need to use the central bit of the street and it is not free for cyclists to exploit - they would have to weave round the pedestrians.

I understand the Councils wish to encourage cycling but there are roads adjacent to Sheep Street that cyclists could use if they wish to save the very few minutes that dismounting to walk through Sheep Street would take. If they wish to use the Sheep Street shops it would again only take a few minutes to reach them after dismounting and leaving cycles at the stands at either end of the street.

I would like to especially raise concerns about cyclists using the paved areas around Pioneer Square and then cycling in to Sheep Street. I have twice narrowly avoided colliding with vehicles (e-scooter and bicycle) where the riders were turning in to Sheep Street at speed, and without looking, from the passage alongside B and M.

I am aware that some cyclists already use Sheep Street as there are no apparent sanctions to doing so. However, it would surely be better to police the current rules better than just give up and allow a free for all. Surely it would be possible for PCOS to be available from time to time to do random stopping /warning cyclists - as happens with random traffic and speeding checks.

I am especially concerned that OCC are not putting this proposal out to public consultation before implementing it. Speaking to some 'key stakeholders' - which may include cycle lobby groups but will not give a voice to the many pedestrian users of Sheep Street - is really not good enough. Nor is the suggestion that consultation will be held part way through the extremely long trial. This really feels like imposing the proposal by stealth - in the hope that people will just get used to it, or not bother to formally complain (and will not even be able to for some months). This is especially worrying given that the people who would be likely to be most affected by the change are the most likely to find it difficult to make their concerns heard.

I would ask that you reconsider the proposal - or at the very least hold a proper consultation in advance. Such a consultation should find ways to involve as many members of the Bicester public, who use Sheep Street, as possible - such as trying to speak to users in the street, for example on market days, rather than just relying on those of us who have the time or ability to contact the council directly.

(6) Resident Bicester	Sheep street is PEDESTRIANISED. There is no need to change the no cycling by law. It is already dangerous walking down with the number of cycles ignoring the by law and illegal electric scooters. What we need is more policing.
Respondent	Support received to Initial ETRO Consultation
(7) Resident Bicester	<p>Last night Cllr Ford shared a post around a number of local Facebook groups to stir up objections to the upcoming decision for a ETRO on Sheep Street to allow cycling.</p> <p>The initial post was very misleading and made it appear as if the change would be permanent, and without consultation. When challenged, the post was deleted and replaced with a more accurate one but still calling on residents to email you.</p> <p>https://www.facebook.com/groups/597327533697836/posts/7715703635193488/</p> <p>I strongly believe the aim is to stir up anti-Active Travel views, something that this particular councillor has been doing a lot on social media.</p> <p>As such I wanted to email to say that I am strongly in favour of this ETRO. I live in Elmsbrook and currently get a lift to BV Station for my commute, as there is no safe cycling route from North Bicester to Bicester Village Station.</p> <p>This change would mean that I would finally be able to cycle to the station safely, via Sheep Street, something I would very much like to do. I, like many commuters, would be passing through mostly outside of opening hours when there is very little activity. As a bonus, I would also be likely to stop and support the restaurants on my home in the evening.</p> <p>We moved to Elmsbrook for a sustainable way of life, please don't let Cllr Ford ruin this brilliant opportunity.</p>