

Division(s): Jericho and Osney; Isis

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT – 9 JUNE 2016

PROPOSED TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT MEASURES OXFORD WESTGATE CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT

Report by Deputy Director of Environment & Economy (Commercial)

Introduction

1. This report presents objections and comments received in the course of the statutory consultation on proposals to introduce and amend various traffic restrictions and provide new and amended pedestrian crossings, in the vicinity of the Westgate Centre in central Oxford as part of the major redevelopment of the Centre.

Background

2. In 2014 Oxford City Council approved – following very extensive local consultation - a planning application for the redevelopment of the Westgate Centre.
3. The principal effect in respect of traffic movements of the approved plans in the vicinity of the Centre is the construction of a new length of public highway on the west and south sides of the development linking Castle Street and Speedwell Street, and the stopping up of the length of Old Greyfriars between its junction with Castle Street and Turn Again Lane. It is proposed to introduce access restrictions to permit local buses and pedal cycles only to use the new length of highway, together with vehicles requiring access to a loading bay being provided for new residential premises within the development (it is proposed that the latter vehicles will only be permitted to enter the road from its south end, and will be required to exit it at the north end).
4. Access to the retained length of Old Greyfriars Street between its junction with Speedwell Street and Turn Again Lane is proposed to be restricted to pedal cycles, taxis, local buses, and vehicles requiring access to the loading area for the development. Restrictions on turning movements to give effect to the above are also proposed.
5. Additionally new and amended zebra and toucan pedestrian crossings are proposed to be provided on New Road immediately west of Castle Street, on the new extension of Speedwell Street, and on Thames Street; the proposals also include signalled crossing points for pedestrians and cyclists incorporated within new signalled junctions but which are not the subject of statutory consultation.

6. A plan summarising the above proposals is shown at Annex 1. A large-scale version of the plan will be on display at the meeting.

Consultation

7. Following an informal consultation carried out in February 2016, a formal consultation on the proposals was carried out between 21 April and 20 May 2016. This comprised a public notice being published in the Oxford Times on 21 May, and street notices being provided on the highway in the vicinity of the Centre. In addition information was sent by email to statutory consultees, including Thames Valley Police, the Fire and ambulance services, Oxford City Council, Bus Operators, taxi organisations and the local Members; a dedicated page was also added to the County's online consultation portal to allow people to view and respond to the proposals.
8. Seven responses were received, comprising three objections, two expressions of support relating to specific proposals, and two making comments and raising queries on specific aspects of the proposals; the responses are summarised at Annex 2. Copies of all the consultation responses are available for inspection in the Members' Resource Centre.
9. Thames Valley Police had no objection in principle to the proposals, but asked how the proposed restrictions were to be enforced, with particular reference to the access restrictions on the new road between Speedwell Street and Castle Street, and also the turning restrictions at junctions. The Police also asked for confirmation that the design of the proposed new and amended pedestrian crossings complied with national guidance.
10. Arriva (a bus operator) strongly supported the proposed restrictions for the new length of highway linking Castle Street with Speedwell Street limiting its use to local buses and pedal cycles, and excluding taxis and private hire vehicles on the grounds that use by the latter would impede buses and could lead to enforcement issues given that some such vehicles were hard to distinguish from private cars.
11. One objection was received from a member of the public in respect of the proposed amendment to the existing zebra crossing on New Road immediately west of its junction with Castle Street, on the grounds that the existing zebra crossing led to significant delays to buses and that a signalled crossing would be preferable especially with the anticipated larger number of pedestrians that will be crossing here when the enlarged Westgate Centre is open.
12. One objection from a member of the public was received in relation to the planned loading bay for the residential premises on the grounds that buses passing loading vehicles waiting on the carriageway would be in potential conflict with oncoming buses; this objection also cited concerns that the proposed new zebra crossing was poorly sited would result in further delays to buses based on experience of the existing zebra crossing on New Road (as referred to in the above objection).

13. A further objection from two members of the public concerned the removal of the traffic lights at the Thames Street junction with Blackfriars Road on the grounds that safety would be impaired in particular due to limited visibility to the east for vehicles turning right onto Thames Street from Blackfriars Road and such traffic would also experience delays waiting to turn onto Thames Street. The objection also raised strong concerns over the safety of pedestrians and cyclists crossing Thames Street and Speedwell Street with the removal of the pedestrian phases provided in the former signalled junctions.
14. One response in support of the proposed pedestrian crossing provision was received from a member of the public, in particular in respect of the proposed new and amended zebra crossings; it was requested that all the new crossings should be constructed on road humps to help reduce speeds, and that they should be well lit.
15. A local residents association (SENDRA – St Ebbe's New Development Residents' Association) requested further information primarily relating to the proposed crossing provision for pedestrians and cyclists, in particular seeking assurances that this includes signalled crossings across Thames Street and Speedwell Street near the Old Greyfriars Street junction, and across Thames Street near the site of the pelican crossing which it is proposed to remove as part of the construction of a new signalled junction with the access to the new car park. Additionally SENDRA recommended that the traffic flows in the vicinity of the Blackfriars Road junction are monitored closely following the removal of the signals to confirm that the junction operated acceptably (especially in respect of traffic turning to and from Blackfriars Road) , with the option of re-introducing signals being retained should monitoring indicate a need.

Response to objections and concerns

16. Thames Valley Police's comments are noted; the enforcement of the proposed access restrictions will be carried out by cameras (as is the case with the current restrictions), with violations being subject to civil enforcement procedures. The proposed crossings will comply with national regulations.
17. The objections relating to the provision of the amended zebra crossing at New Road and the proposed new zebra crossing are noted. While it is accepted that buses can occasionally spend quite extended times waiting to give way to pedestrians at the existing zebra crossing, these delays are not judged to be excessive and no objections were received from the bus operators to these proposals. While signalled crossings at these locations should be technically feasible and could be considered should there prove to be a need in the future (subject to funding), a zebra crossing will typically provide a better level of service for pedestrians. The siting of the new zebra crossing links to the proposed signalled pedestrian crossing within the new traffic signal junction on Thames Street at the junction with the car park.

18. The objection relating to the proposed loading bay appear to be based on a misunderstanding of the detailed proposal, which is for an off- carriageway bay so that loading vehicles would not be impeding buses.
19. The objection relating to the removal of the signals at the Thames Street / Blackfriars Road junction is noted but the proposed redesign of this junction will improve visibility to the right to address the safety concerns. It is accepted that at times traffic turning from Blackfriars Road may have slightly longer delays than with the present signal control, but overall the traffic movements in the area will be better served by the proposed change to give way control for this junction, which will for example also benefit vehicles travelling into Blackfriars Road. The proposed new signalled crossing immediately east of the Blackfriars Road junction will – in conjunction with a signalled pedestrian phase being provided within the new junction of Speedwell Street and Old Greyfriars Street – maintain a safe route for pedestrians and cyclists crossing to and from the south side of Thames Street to the city centre.
20. The response by SENDRA is noted; the consultants acting on behalf of the developers will respond to their requests for information on aspects of the detailed design. Signalled crossing points across Thames Street (and Speedwell Street in the vicinity of the Old Greyfriars Street junction) will be provided, and the operation of the new highway provision including the revised junction with Blackfriars Road will – if approved - be monitored very closely.
21. The response in support of the proposed crossings is noted; it is however only proposed to construct the new zebra crossing on a road hump. The street lighting provided at the crossings will meet the appropriate standards. Similarly the response in support of the proposed access restrictions is noted.

How the Project supports LTP4 Objectives

22. The proposals would help facilitate the safe and efficient movement of pedestrians, pedal cyclists, local buses and other general traffic in the vicinity of the redeveloped centre.

Financial and Staff Implications (including Revenue)

23. Funding for the proposal is being delivered by the developers of the Westgate Centre; the appraisal of the proposals and consultation has been undertaken by E&E officers as part of their normal duties.

RECOMMENDATION

24. **The Cabinet Member for the Environment is RECOMMENDED to approve implementation of the proposals as advertised.**

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MARK KEMP

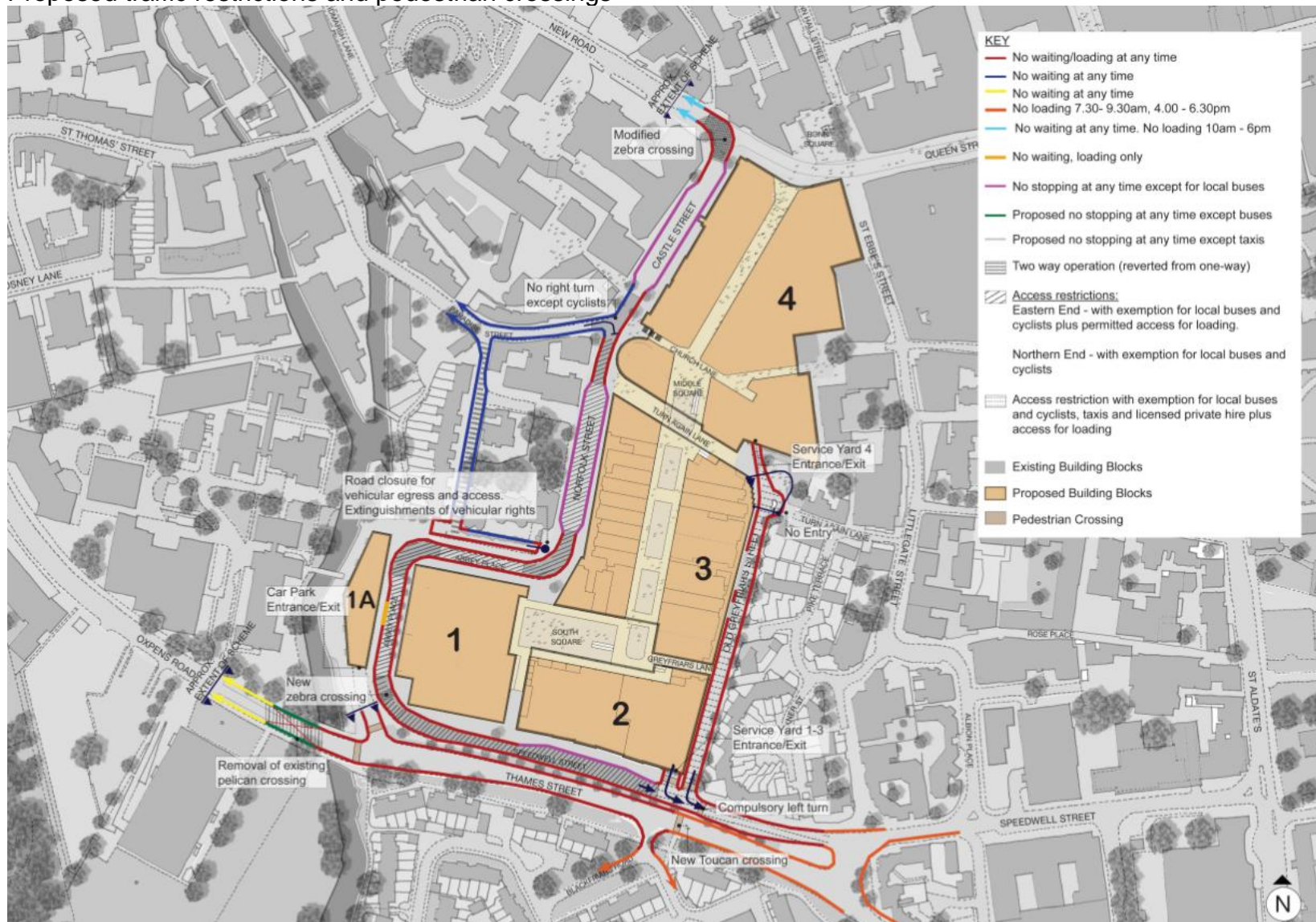
Deputy Director of Environment & Economy (Commercial)

Background papers: Consultation responses

Contact Officers: Owen Jenkins 01865 323304

June 2016

Proposed traffic restrictions and pedestrian crossings



Summary of consultation responses

RESPONDENT	SUMMARISED COMMENTS
Thames Valley Police	No objection but asked for information on the enforcement of the proposed restrictions, and assurance that the proposed pedestrian crossings are in accordance with national standards.
SENDRA (St Ebbe's New Development Residents' Association)	No objection but requested further information on aspects of the detailed design of the proposed pedestrian and cyclist crossings and junctions, including clarification of crossing facilities being provided at the new signalled junctions. Concerned that the proposed removal of the signals at the Thames Street / Blackfriars Road junction could lead to difficulties for traffic turning right to Blackfriars Road, and for traffic exiting Blackfriars Road and requested that this be monitored closely following implementation with a view to re-instating the signals if required.
Arriva Bus	Strongly supported the proposals in respect of the access restrictions on the link road between Castle Street and Speedwell Street (limiting the use of this road to local buses, pedal cycles and loading vehicles for plot 1A, and excluding taxis and private hire vehicles).
Online response	Objected to the proposed amended zebra crossing on New Road, on the grounds that the current zebra leads to queues of buses waiting for the crossing to be clear of pedestrians, leading to delays for bus passengers (and in particular drew attention to the bus services continuing to the rail station, and therefore the potential wider impact of such delays on public transport users) and considered that the delays will only increase with increased pedestrian activity resulting from the enlarged Westgate Centre. A signalled crossing was suggested as a means of more fairly balancing the needs of pedestrians and bus passengers.

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<p>Online response</p>	<p>Objected to the proposed loading bay adjacent to plot 1 A on the grounds that this would impede buses and requested that the loading bay was moved completely off road. Objected to the proposed new zebra crossing as considered this was poorly located and would lead to congestion for buses.</p>
<p>Local resident (letter signed by two parties)</p>	<p>Objected to the proposed removal of the traffic signals at the Thames Street / Blackfriars Road junction on the grounds that visibility for traffic to the right from Blackfriars Road is limited, and also that the consequent removal of the pedestrian phase at the signals would lead to significant danger and delays to the pedestrians and cyclists crossing here to and from the city centre, and requested the provision of a signalled crossing (both across Thames Street and Speedwell Street)</p>
<p>Online response</p>	<p>Supported the proposed crossings and in particular the zebra crossings, and requested that they are humped to reduce traffic speeds, and well lit.</p>