

Divisions affected: *Jericho and Osney*

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT – 26 JANUARY 2023**

### **OXFORD - ST MICHAEL'S STREET: PROPOSED PERMANENT PROHIBITION OF VEHICLES AT EAST END OF STREET**

Report by Corporate Director, Environment and Place

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. The Cabinet Member for Highway Management is **RECOMMENDED** to approve the making of the order to prohibit all vehicles at the East end of St Michael's Street.

#### **Executive summary**

2. This report presents responses received during the statutory consultation phase of an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) which prohibits all vehicles at the East end of St Michael's Street as shown in **Annex 1**. The making of the ETRO was approved at the Cabinet Member for Highway Management decisions meeting on 27 January 2022.

#### **Introduction**

3. The ETRO has continued the provisions of a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (made under the Department for Transport COVID regulations) which prohibited all vehicles from using the 50-metre length of St Michael's Street west of its junction with Cornmarket Street to enable outdoor seating to be provided for the adjacent hospitality businesses.
4. This proposal to make the ETRO permanent has been received from Oxford City Council's Business Liaison Officer at the request of the adjacent businesses.

#### **Sustainability Implications**

5. Whilst assisting local businesses as a result of enabling tables and chairs to be placed on the carriageway, the proposals raise issues for cyclists who are required to dismount when using this east end of St Michael's Street. However, the section where cyclists have to dismount is relatively short and an alternative route East-West through the city centre is available where dismounting is not

necessary – New Inn Hall Street, George Street, Broad Street, albeit on roads used by a greater number of vehicles.

## **Financial and Staff Implications (including Revenue)**

6. Funding for consultation on the proposal has been provided by Oxford City Council, who have also developed and identified funding for implementation of a proposed St Michael's Street improvement scheme. This improvement scheme would include modifications to materials and the street layout to enhance the quality of the public realm and would facilitate the passage of pedestrians (including wheelchairs) and cyclists (where they need to push their bicycles along the length of the proposed restriction).

## **Equality and Inclusion Implications**

7. No implications in respect of equalities or inclusion have been identified in respect of the proposal. The city council improvement scheme aforementioned in paragraph 6 is also being developed for the detailed layout to accommodate the passage of wheelchairs and pedal cycles to be pushed along the length of the proposed restriction, at least to the same level as provided for by the measures currently in place, which are judged to be adequate. While the proposal removes the opportunity for blue badge holders for 3-hour parking on a short length of double yellow lines previously accessible prior to the temporary covid-19 traffic regulation order and the current experimental order, there are formal disabled persons parking places very close by.

## **Formal Consultation**

8. The formal consultation on the ETRO started on 2 March 2022. A notice was published in the Oxford Times newspaper and an email sent to statutory consultees, including Thames Valley Police, the Fire & Rescue Service, Ambulance service, Bus operators, Oxford City Council, local City councillors, pedestrian and cycle groups and the local County Councillors representing the Jericho & Osney, and University Parks divisions.
9. Additionally, street notices were placed on site in the immediate vicinity, and letters sent directly to approximately 100 properties in the area.
10. 16 responses were received during the course of the consultation period, comprising of 11 in support (69%), three objecting (19%), one expressing concerns, and Thames Valley Police not objecting.
11. The responses are shown at **Annex 3**, and copies of the original responses are available for County Councillors on request.

## **Officer response to objections/concerns**

12. Thames Valley Police expressed no objection to the proposals providing the burden for enforcement does not fall to the Police.
13. The overwhelming majority of those objecting to the proposals or raising concerns did so because St Michael's Street provides a useful East-West link across the city centre for cyclists, particularly when Broad Street is closed for special events such as the Christmas Market.
14. The city council and county council have jointly committed to seeking to ensure that Broad Street is only closed to cyclists on an emergency/short term basis, with the understanding being that the Christmas Market will no longer be allowed to set up in Broad Street in a way that requires cyclists to dismount. This will mean that if the east end of St Michael's Street is pedestrianised on a permanent basis there will be an alternative East-West route through the city centre i.e. New Inn Hall Street, George Street, Broad Street (as shown in **Annex 2**), albeit on roads used by a greater number of vehicles. This is on the basis that cyclists have a city centre East-West option other than to have to dismount and push their bicycles for the 50m distance at the east end of St Michael's Street that these proposals will necessitate.
15. Another alternative for East-West cycle journeys across the city centre is to make use of Queen Street and High Street or Queen Street, Cornmarket Street, Ship Street, Turl Street and Broad Street. This is currently only possible after 6pm and before 10am due to the prohibition of cycling on Queen Street and Cornmarket Street outside of these hours. To improve the offer to cyclists for East-West movements across the city centre, the prohibition of cycling could be relaxed. This is likely to cause concerns from some about the possibility of danger and fear of accidents, between cyclists and pedestrians in particular. The Cabinet Member could ask officers to investigate the possibility of a trial relaxation of cycling prohibition of cycling, using an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO).
16. Overall, it is the view of officers that despite the proposals introducing a small amount of inconvenience to cyclists wanting to use St Michael's Street as part of a quiet East-West route across the city centre, this is outweighed by the benefits to the businesses in the street as a result of being able to have tables and chairs on the carriageway on a permanent basis, in this case.

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

17. It is suggested that a review of the scheme is carried out approximately 12 months after implementation.

Bill Cotton  
Corporate Director, Environment and Place

Annexes                      Annex 1: Consultation plan  
                                    Annex 2: Plan showing alternative route for pedal cyclists  
                                    Annex 3: Consultation responses

Contact Officers:            Ben Smith 073920318877  
                                    Tim Shickle 07920591545

January 2023

Drawing No.

**Key**

 Prohibition of Vehicles

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright, and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Oxfordshire County Council Licence No LA078805

Rev.	Date	Purpose of revision	Drawn	Checked	Approved



**OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

Bill Cotton  
Corporate Director for  
Environment and Place  
Communities  
Oxfordshire County Council  
County Hall  
Oxford  
OX1 1ND  
Tel: 0345 310 11 11  
Fax: (01865) 241577

**Project title**

PROHIBITION OF VEHICLES

**Drawing title**

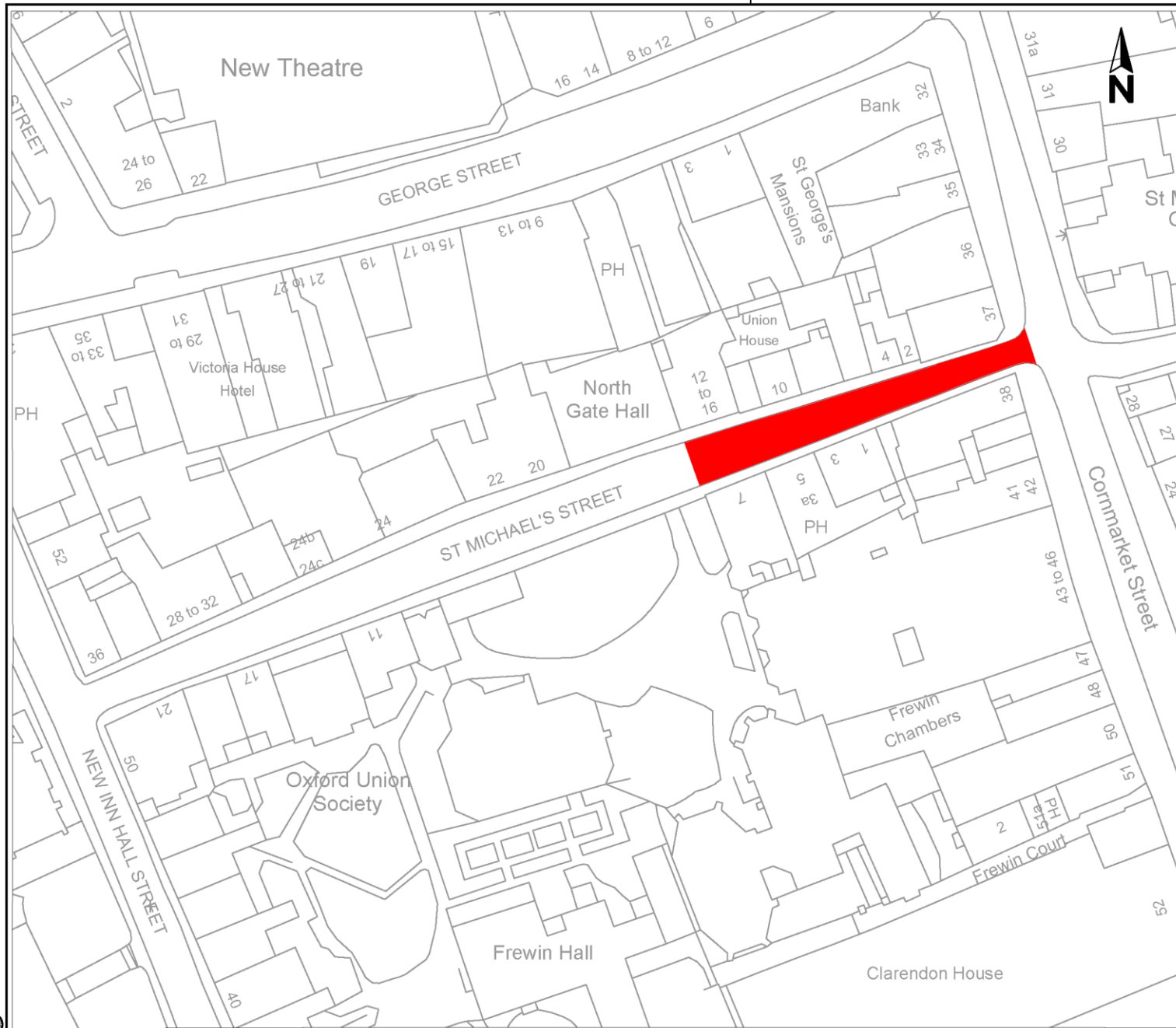
OXFORD  
ST. MICHAEL'S STREET

**Drawing Status**

Scale @ A3	Drawn by	Checked by	Approved by
N.T.S.	JaC		
	Date drawn 11/21	Date checked	Date approved

Oxfordshire Project No. & File Ref

Drawing No.	Revision
	0





**ANNEX 3**

<b>RESPONDENT</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
(1) Traffic Management Officer, (Thames Valley Police)	<p><b>No objection</b> – In principle I do not object providing the burden for enforcement does NOT fall to the Police. Our priorities must be viewed in the context of the many other more pressing and demanding commitments which our officers face.</p> <p>Perhaps you could confirm what measures will be included to ensure this restriction is self-enforcing, again looking towards the new powers afforded to you by Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act.. I understand that many like restrictions within the City suffer poor compliance by the two wheeled motor vehicle and this needs to be addressed if pedestrian safety is to be achieved.</p>
(2) Local County Cllr, (Jericho & Osney division)	<p><b>Support</b> – Traffic-free streets are great, so I support the closure. I know it's irritating for cyclists to have to get off and walk, but there isn't really the space for a cycle track as well as all the pedestrians in this narrow street, and Cornmarket St is so busy that it's safer if east-west cyclists walk across there as well.</p>
(3) Oxford Civic Society Transport Group	<p><b>Object</b> – I strongly object to this proposal because of the reasons already stated in your proposal. Instead of closing this road to cyclists, you should be looking for a way through to Hythe Bridge Street and the rail station for cyclists. Now is the time to explore with St. Peter's college and the University whether they can offer a route from New Inn Hall Street to St. Georges Mews and thence (when Worcester st carpark is redeveloped) for cyclists to reach the rail station safely. Queen Street is closed to cyclists during the daytime and George Street is unsuitable for a variety of reasons, not least because cyclists' needs are not met. Now is definitely NOT the time to be restricting cyclists especially when your other plans (e.g. LTCP5) are trying to encourage cycling.</p> <p>Surely there is enough space in St. Michaels Street for both cafes and cyclists.</p>
(4) As an individual, (Oxford, Larkins Lane)	<p><b>Object</b> - Access to Mallams auctioneers</p>
(5) As an individual, (Oxford, Stratford Street)	<p><b>Object</b> - It's already difficult to get from East Oxford to West Oxford (eg the railway station) by bicycle - Queen Street is closed to bicycles during the day and Broad Street is regularly closed to bicycles when there are special events (eg Christmas markets, summer festivals). NB when Broad Street is closed I think there should be diversion/road closed signs warning cyclists from the High Street as would happen when roads are closed to cars.</p>

	<p>I don't support closing St Michael's St to bicycles because when Broad Street is also closed there will be no way for cyclists to get East to West and vice versa except via a big diversion along the A420/Speedwell Street (in proportion to typical journey lengths by bike this is a significant increase in journey time). Particularly when there's no warning to cyclists and they have cycled up to Broad Street and then have to retrace their route which means the increase in journey time is longer than might be anticipated on paper.</p> <p>I think it'd be better to compromise and use some of the carriageway on St Michael's Street for a two way cycle lane and the rest for restaurant seating.</p>
(6) As part of a group/organisation, (Oxford, Apsley Road)	<p><b>Concerns</b> - We are supportive of the closure of St Michaels St. The proposal to remove car parking in Broad St and to create a wide bi-directional cycle route along the length of Broad St will be transformative, contributing a link in an east-west cycle route across the city centre. We welcome this. However we still have ongoing concerns about maintaining the integrity of the east-west cycle route all year round. If there is any chance that Broad St will be closed for markets and other events and the cycle clearway is blocked then an alternative route must be found. St Michaels St was an obvious route. The removal of that opportunity means that the route must go via Turl St &lt;-&gt; Ship St &lt;-&gt; Cornmarket which is indirect and unsatisfactory.</p>
(7) As an individual, (Oxford, Bickerton Rd)	<p><b>Support</b> - Anything that reduces traffic in Oxford is desperately needed, the city is being choked, and needs to be turned back onto a nice place to live or visit</p>
(8) As an individual, (Oxford, St. Bernard's Road )	<p><b>Support</b> - Brings life and community feel to the streets.</p>
(9) As an individual, (Oxford, Linton Rd)	<p><b>Support</b> - I am wholly supportive of any initiative which promotes community conviviality by reducing vehicle traffic and making spaces more open for dining and pedestrians</p>
(10) As an individual, (Oxford, Beechcroft Road)	<p><b>Support</b> - The street is much more pleasant and it's great to be able to sit outside the cafes and restaurants. This improves Oxford city centre as a desirable destination and place to spend time.</p>
(11) As an individual, (Oxford, Saunders)	<p><b>Support</b> - More space outdoors for customers</p>



(12) As an individual, (Oxford, Earl Street)	<b>Support</b> - It improves the character and liveability of the city centre
(131) As an individual, (Oxford, Bateman Street)	<b>Support</b> - Makes accessing shops and cafés easier on foot, allows for better navigation of the city centre.
(14) As an individual, (Oxford, Botley Road)	<b>Support</b> - Safe and inclusive environment for residents and visitors to enjoy a car free public space
(15) As an individual, (Oxford, Bartlemas)	<b>Support</b> - There's no need for motor vehicles here, and every need for people, and the businesses to use the space.
(16) As an individual, (Kennington , Meadow View)	<b>Support</b> - Reduces traffic on new inn hall street. Cafes and businesses are a pleasure to visit with fewer cars present