

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT (INCLUDING TRANSPORT)

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 6 August 2020 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 11.07 am

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Yvonne Constance OBE – in the Chair

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor John Howson (for Agenda Item 4)
Councillor Emma Turnbull (for Agenda Item 4)
Councillor Susanna Pressel (for Agenda Item 4)
Councillor John Sanders

Officers:

Whole of meeting G. Warrington (Law & Governance); S. Rooney & T. Shickle (Community Operations)

The Cabinet Member for Environment considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, and decided as set out below. Except as insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

17/20 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS
(Agenda No. 3)

<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Item</i>
David Hearn)
Jamie Hartzell)
John Mair)
Patrick Davey)
Sandy Herrington) 4. Oxford: Walton Street –
Stephen Brown) Proposed Experimental Closure
Hugh Lee)
City Councillor Alex Hollingsworth)
County Councillor John Howson)
County Councillor Susannah Pressel)

County Councillor Emma Turnbull)
County Councillor John Sanders)

18/20 OXFORD: WALTON STREET - PROPOSED EXPERIMENTAL CLOSURE

(Agenda No. 4)

In July 2020 the Cabinet Member for Environment deferred a decision on the continuation of the experimental closure pending further analysis and assessment of its impact.

However, since that decision it had been decided to reconsider the situation in the light of a number of developments namely:

- Further traffic surveying undertaken in Walton Manor area which had found that local mitigation measures implemented to try and ease congestion for certain streets including St Bernard's Rd during the trial had continued to be unsuccessful. The county council had confirmed Tranche 1 Covid 19 Active travel measures which included a proposal to install a temporary bus gate within the Worcester Street/Beaumont Street area, which would have the effect of restricting through traffic through the Walton Manor/Jericho area.
- The county council was considering detailed consultation into the development of a wider Low Traffic Neighbourhood concept (LTN) through application to the Tranche 2 Covid 19 Active Travel funding. These were for measures across the city but could include the Jericho and Walton Manor area.
- The need to aid local businesses in recovery after a four-month (COVID-19) period of economic uncertainty.

The report set out options and timeline for both cancellation of the order and progression of development and consultation for a potential LTN concept for the Jericho/Walton Manor area in conjunction with local residents and business groups.

Jamie Hartzell a resident of Walton Manor spoke on behalf of the Jericho Low Traffic Neighbourhood group which represented a large number of residents and businesses in the area and who were firmly opposed to opening the barrier at this time. They regarded this as a hasty and poorly thought-through recommendation, should be dismissed with a return to the decision taken only 3 weeks ago and a full and proper consultation conducted with the community with the aim of reaching a decision before Christmas. Their understanding was that consideration was being given in part to removing the barrier because of the work they had done in developing a low traffic neighbourhood for Jericho and Walton Manor and although supporting the aims of a LTN they had always said that the barrier should remain closed until the low traffic neighbourhood had been fully designed and consulted on, and future plans and levels of investment for the area decided. For that reason they opposed this recommendation. It would open the floodgates to traffic, without any firm commitment by the Council to developing a low traffic neighbourhood. If there was such a commitment they would expect the Cabinet Member to ask if reopening the barrier

fitted in with their plans but that had not happened neither had work been carried out to assess if their plans were workable. In fact, the latest meeting had been cancelled. He understood these things took time which made them question why the rush to open the barrier now which seemed an impetuous decision. Also had the Council considered the impact the bus gate would have on opening the barrier? Again it appeared not as, if the bus gate were to be sited in Beaumont Street, as proposed, this would send 15,000 vehicles a day along Walton Street, St Bernard's Road and Little Clarendon Street. This change in position in less than two weeks to one not supported by a majority meant that the previous promise of consultation had been overridden and left the community little time to respond neither had it been set out if it was planned to protect this neighbourhood from traffic once the barrier had been removed. He strongly advised not to go ahead with this decision which was hurried, reckless and ill-advised, undermined confidence in local government decision making and increased local resentment and division. The constructive position we were in 3 weeks ago needed to be retained to avoid creating further disagreement and division and get back to working together on developing a solution for a low traffic neighbourhood that best met the needs of the community as a whole.

John Mair spoke as a resident of Jericho and author/editor of thirty-five newsletters on the Walton Street Closure most of which had been firmly in support of the scheme and had helped shape the debate. There needed to be some joined up thinking by both County and City Councils on the management of traffic in this micro area. The bus gate and the lifting of the barrier- if that is what was to happen needed to happen with no lifting until any bus gate was in place. To do otherwise would simply re-invent rat runs through Walton street and up St Bernard's and Leckford Roads. That made no sense. The Hythe Bridge Street bus gate was a seriously bad idea for three reasons:

- i. Cutting off North from East Oxford without sensible reason.
- ii. Traffic flows along Worcester and Beaumont Street had been constant and moderate through the pandemic and after.
- iii. On the collander principle, it would have the effect of bringing rat runs back to Jericho in spades.

A Walton Street Bus gate instead, however, presented a better option. Closure of Walton Street had been a success in air quality and rebuilding community terms but a physical and PR mess. That could be easily rectified by a simple bus gate at the Worcester Street end of Walton Street with four simple guiding principles:

- i. Buses, emergency vehicles, taxis cycles and motor-cycles allowed through.
- ii. Delivery vehicles within certain hours.
- iii. Vitally ANPR access to vehicles registered to park in the Jericho and Walton Manor CPZs. Residents of the two areas.
- iv. One way south to north.

A firm condition should be given for much more traffic calming/management along all of Walton Street:

- a. 20 mph speed limit. Much more signage.

- b. more speed bumps and chicanes.
- c. Pavements extended outwards from Great Clarendon to Cranham Street to incubate cafe culture
- d. Exit routes clearly marked to avoid repetition of rat runs e.g in Leckford Road and St Bernard's Road.

That seemed to him to join up some of the dots. The proposed HBS bus gate would be a recipe for traffic chaos and much grief. Likewise, the Low Car Neighbourhood suggestion from the group formerly known as Don't Choke Jericho merely displaced rat runs from Walton Street into quiet residential streets in Jericho and past a school. It looked elegant but was based on a central flaw. Both should be ditched.

Patrick Davey set out the background, politics, twists and turns, and community reactions which were very well known to everyone. This process had involved a considerable journey with a great deal of emotion and turbulence, perhaps mirroring that of our broader politics. However, he believed that a very important milestone had been reached on that journey, namely the proposed reopening of Walton Street. He strongly believed this was the right decision, made for the right reasons, and commended the bravery and sense of justice of those making this decision. Traffic flows were an emotive issue, as they impacted greatly on the quality of our day to day lives. That was why traffic management required some cardinal principles of equity, justice and a sense of fair play. The translation of that was that it was reasonable for everyone to take their fair share of traffic and for vehicle traffic to be managed in a way that minimised its numbers and its impact while at the same time allowing a vibrant life and a healthy economy. The shutting of Walton Street, put simply, was not fair because the entirety of Walton Street's fair share of traffic was displaced northward, largely into St Bernards Road. He understood that shutting was done for the best of reasons and sympathised with those making the decision, nonetheless in its impact it had been unfair and the consequences inequitable and discriminatory. That might not have been the intention but that is what had happened. He believed that those in St Bernard's Road had made the argument powerfully and politely that this injustice should be corrected using the cardinal principles of traffic management, particularly the 'fair share' one. He now believed that the County Council had listened intently to that message. By reference to these standards he, therefore, strongly believed that reopening Walton Street was just and equitable and, therefore, appropriate. Realising that this decision required considerable political bravery on the part of the Cabinet Member he strongly believed it was the right action and she should be commended for it. Reopening Walton Street was clearly part of a journey to a better future for the whole neighbourhood along with bus gates, a correctly managed development of a low traffic neighbourhood in the area, the Jericho LTN plans and pedestrianisation and four modal filters. By listening and engagement and with compromise, most people could get the most of what they wanted and he urged the council to undertake immediate engagement to develop the best possible future for us all and the setting up of appropriate structures to deliver those aims and to look forward to a wonderful beautiful prosperous neighbourhood.

Sandy Herrington spoke as a resident of St Bernard's Road for 10 years and Oxford 14 years and mother of two young children attending the local primary school. Since last October, she had been working with other residents from her street and others from the community to try to improve the traffic situation, primarily for St Bernard's

Road. As the Cabinet Member was well aware by now, and officers had acknowledged in their recommendation, the redirection of traffic away from south Walton Street has had a devastating impact on our street. Since last October, my fellow residents and I had been championing the principle of equity that should guide traffic policies and believed that efforts should be made to reduce the overall traffic coming into the neighbourhood, with the remainder shared fairly between the streets. She praised the county council for their work on the Walton Street Experimental Closure and for taking the courageous and the rational decision to recommend its reopening. The new bus gate on Worcester Street, along with others, was a great initiative to improve the quality of the environment in central Oxford. That said, that change would mean that St Bernard's Road would continue to be used by motor traffic exiting the Jericho area, as they would all need to go onto Woodstock Road to travel towards the ring road. That meant that, without further traffic mitigation measures, the bad traffic situation on St Bernard's Road would not go away, even with the reopening of Walton Street. She urged the county council, having made the right and brave recommendation on Walton Street, to continue taking the courageous path to reduce motor traffic for our street and neighbouring streets. With the central government in full support of transitioning to active travels, now was the time to create a genuine low traffic neighbourhood and she urged the council to embrace this opportunity and implement a fully consulted pedestrianisation as proposed by Jericho Low Traffic Neighbourhood, to transform our local area and our quality of life.

Stephen Brown spoke as a resident of the southern part of Walton Street and Chair of the South Jericho Residents Association which represented residents in Worcester Place, Walton Lane, and Walton Street on both sides but mainly to the west up to the Richmond Road junction. Following the last Delegated Decisions meeting, only 3 weeks ago, they had been working very constructively with Jamie Hartzell and the Jericho Low Traffic Neighbourhood group and very much welcomed the support from the Council regarding the potential of developing such an area. Although a phenomenal amount of work had been done by volunteers there was a lot more detailed work required – a Jericho-wide consultation and, of course, funding, although much could be done at relatively low cost. Our Association fully endorsed the comments made earlier by Jamie Hartzell and it was quite hard to describe the shock and horror of the intention to re-open the road immediately and unconditionally. Our fear was that the potential for rat-running and the chaos and harm experienced previously would return. Obviously, if and when the Bus Gate was installed, operational and bedded in traffic flows throughout this part of the city would change. Until we had all experienced how that would turn out, he pleaded that this decision be deferred until then. Even then, their concern was that traffic of all sizes and forms would soon work out that there was a convenient loop (Woodstock Road, St. Giles, Beaumont Street, Walton Street and Kingston Road). This new traffic would not just affect his part of Jericho but would have repercussions for the central part of Walton Street and, significantly, add to the load on the St. Bernard's Road area, which sadly had been plagued with so much locally generated traffic of late. There were many obvious reasons for developing the proposed Low Traffic Neighbourhood and many benefits, but it was a fact that whatever the ultimate detail, there would be some form of barrier somewhere along the central part of Walton Street, which would prevent this looping effect from occurring. He urged deferral of any decision to re-open the Walton Street barrier until such time as the Council had properly considered if the Jericho Low Traffic Neighbourhood group's proposals could be readily implemented

and had had a chance to assess the impact of the bus gates, once in place, on the likely flow of traffic through residential streets. As an Association they would work with the Cabinet Member and Officers in developing the Low Traffic Neighbourhood area but frankly confidence in developing a solution for the benefit of all parties, had been knocked by the potential recommendation today.

David Hearn asked why precisely during the current Covid crisis, when Government were recommending on grounds of safety the use of cars, were the County and City Councils using the opportunity to take the strange step of introducing bus gates. Nobody wanted to kill the elderly or sick so why was this being promoted now. Secondly with regard to an earlier comment regarding the school run that was clearly known to exacerbate traffic levels locally and he suggested the best way to reduce congestion would be to encourage people to walk their children to school suggesting that every school catchment area should be local to that specific school. Walton Street had shown and proved how bad this elimination of rat running was. Rat running was a subjective thing as we all use other people's streets. He objected to removal as it would raise pollution and private car mileage suggesting instead improvements be secured to the A34 including 3 lanes both ways to Portsmouth to avoid gridlock and dangerous traffic levels in Wolvercote and Wytham.

Hugh Lee a resident of Observatory Street fully agreed with the recommendation of officers "to end the experimental order and return the road layout and signage to its original configuration as designed prior to the Walton Street closure" for the reasons they had given. Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) could be good for most people and the environment, where they were practical and it might be so to have a LTN in Jericho but considerable consultation was necessary first especially as the experimental closure at one end of Walton Street had aroused heated divisions in the community. The priority of the County and City Councils now should be to help heal those divisions with Councillors and Officers spending time in Jericho, in the streets and knocking on doors, talking to all the traders and the residents, especially those that did not have internet access and so had not been able to submit comments during the lockdown, and observing the actual effect of the various measures they had tried to improve the situation, including the cones at the junction of Walton Street and St Bernard's Road, which had resulted in vehicles driving the wrong way round the mini roundabout and including the signs at the Woodstock Road end of Observatory Street, which contradictorily say "Shops & Businesses open as usual" and "RESIDENTS ACCESS ONLY BEYOND THIS POINT". A LTN needed good public transport but at the moment there is no public transport in Jericho. A major purpose of a LTN was to reduce pollution. The current experimental closure of Walton Street had not done that. It had stopped rat running and so reduced the pollution from those vehicles, but it had considerably increased car journey lengths and times for residents and visitors and thus increased their emissions. Pollution had, therefore, merely been displaced from parts of Jericho to parts of Walton Manor. Careful measurement of pollution needed to be done after Walton Street was re-opened, so that the effect of any further new measures could be accurately assessed. St Bernard's Road had borne the brunt of this increased pollution and congestion. That could be stopped by having 'all motor vehicle prohibited' signs (a motor bicycle and a car in a red circle) 'except for access' at the entrance to St Bernard's Road, as in Elms Road in Marston. A LTN needed to take into account those who needed to use a car but were not eligible for a 'disabled badge' and could

not afford taxis. That included those with cancer but who might live longer than 12 months, those with disabilities that might be curable, those who cared for people in places that had no adequate public transport, those with a medical condition that might make using public transport unsafe and those with heavy luggage going to the station. There could be a bus gate near the Worcester College end of Walton Street, in place of the current experimental barrier using number plate recognition to allow through vehicles with residents parking permits for Jericho and Walton Manor, while fining 'rat runners' from outside those neighbourhoods. Some had said that bus gates were only allowed on bus routes but Walton Street was clearly supposed to be a bus route as bus stops were painted on the road outside 168 Walton Street and outside Exeter College's Cohen Quad on Walton Street which were renewed when the latest roadworks at that end of Walton Street were completed in the autumn of 2019.

City Councillor Alex Hollingsworth (Carfax ward, which included the southern end of Walton Street, whose residents would be the most affected by this decision today). Before Walton Street was closed, people with homes in the southern end of Walton Street had to put up with queuing traffic immediately outside their homes – homes whose windows were effectively directly on the street – on virtually every day of the year. Not just for a few minutes at rush hour, but for hours on end. For those residents – a mixture of students, private tenants, social housing tenants and vulnerable people in supported accommodation as well as home-owners – the closure had been transformative. Their children could play outside safely, they could open their windows without being choked with fumes, they were not constantly battling the noise of traffic which was why almost every single household in the south end of Walton Street supported keeping the road closure in place. The problem that they suffered was primarily caused by rat-running traffic trying to get from the north of the city centre to the south and west and trying to avoid Beaumont Street by using Little Clarendon Street and Walton Street as a short-cut. The County Council's traffic survey data showed that far more traffic travelled south bound than north bound on the southern end of Walton Street – concrete evidence of what local people could see was happening. Closure of Walton Street had taken away the rat run and it was absolutely vital that it was not brought back. He used the word rat run deliberately – as this was not traffic from drivers accessing local businesses but traffic driving through Jericho, through Walton Street, without stopping, and contributing nothing to the area but pollution, disruption and dismay. However, the benefits of the closure had been much wider than just for residents of the southern end of Walton Street. The closure had created a space where cyclists and pedestrians felt safe, exactly the conditions that the Government was encouraging all councils to create. He knew the challenges Oxfordshire County Council faced in trying to find schemes that could meet the Government's criteria of reallocating space away from cars and towards pedestrians and cyclists but Walton Street was a place where that shift had happened and we should not revert back to when cyclists were squeezed by motor vehicles inches away from them and pedestrians had to walk through the pollution from queuing rat-running traffic. The report rightly said that residents in St Bernard's Road and Leckford Road needed greater protection from traffic, but there were plenty of other options not yet tried to create that protection. Instead of recreating the rat run traffic jams in southern Walton Street, we needed to look at genuine traffic impact reduction measures like those in Beechcroft Road in Summertown. Recreating rat run traffic jams would do nothing to support local businesses as moving cars, however slow, did not create more customers. There were still the same number of parking

spaces in Walton Street as ever and before Covid they were just as busy. What would help would be more and better places for cycles to be securely locked, more places for customers to sit and linger - all the things that were deterred not encouraged by heavier traffic. The report before you today asked the Cabinet Member to re-open Walton Street within a few days, weeks before the new experimental bus gates were in place and weeks or months before the necessary detailed design and consultation on a Low Traffic Neighbourhood had been completed. If that happened, the result would be a return to the horrendous conditions suffered by residents, cyclists and pedestrians alike. It was unquestionably the wrong thing to do. He had lived in Jericho for nearly 30 years using these streets to walk, cycle and drive. However, as a resident of Jericho and on behalf of my constituents who were also residents of Jericho he asked the Cabinet Member not to support the recommendation in front of her today. At the very least re-opening Walton Street should not be considered until detailed designs for the bus gates were not just known but firmly in place and even better would be a commitment to keeping the current Walton Street closure in place until a Low Traffic Neighbourhood scheme could be fully designed, consulted upon and implemented. That after all was what had been promised only a few weeks ago and was what he asked should be reaffirmed here today.

County Councillor John Howson. Three weeks ago I spoke on a proposal to defer a decision on this matter due to the need for further work. He was grateful to the Cabinet Member for letting me speak again at this special meeting, but not a little surprised that it had to be called. Nothing in the officer report prepared for today's meeting seemed to him to demand the urgency of a special meeting in August. Indeed, one reason for changing the decision appears to be that *'the county council is considering detailed consultation into the development of wider Low Traffic Neighbourhood Areas LTNs. These might include Jericho and Walton Manor'*, but presumably they might equally well not include either or both of those areas. That seemed a very thin reason for calling a special meeting to overturn a decision. The other reasons were equally valid three weeks ago and the problems facing St Bernard's Road and Leckford Road were fully aired at the last meeting by him and others. He was dubious as to whether re-opening Walton Street would help the residents of these two roads now traffic patterns had been established and especially if traffic could only travel north from Jericho to reach the rest of the city and surrounding areas if a bus gate was introduced. Indeed, traffic might become worse. Earlier in the year, the Cabinet Member had been kind enough to involve local councillors in discussions ahead of proposed changes after the Walton Street barrier had been created. That discussion with county councillors seemed to have been replaced more recently by discussions with city councillors whose administration now seemed to be driving the policy for highways in Oxford City. A case of the tail wagging the dog if ever there was one. At the last meeting he had urged that if residents in his Division were to be deterred from using cars, then better bus services were needed and suggested a return of a bus along Walton Street and Kingston Road. Nobody knew when the barrier would be removed, if its removal was indeed agreed today. Would it be this afternoon; when officers got around to it or when any bus gate was introduced? Clarification was needed. It was for these reasons he urged the Cabinet member not to overturn the decision made three weeks ago and to go further and introduce measures to alleviate the volume of traffic using both Leckford Road and St Bernard's Road.

Two other actions that the Cabinet member might consider were:

1. Consultation as soon as possible on a comprehensive and strategic approach to traffic including the city's ZEZ/ULEZ scheme and the congestion charge/work place parking levy first mooted in LTP4 in 2014.
2. A strategy for last mile delivery should also be rapidly introduced.

Finally he understood that OAPs without an internet connection were being forced to wait very long periods of time for bus pass renewals because the county had not yet sorted out how to deal with snail mail. He hoped that wasn't correct and would encourage the Cabinet Member to make sure that such basic functions were working before altering a decision taken only three weeks ago.

County Councillor Susanna Pressel recognising the divergent views on this issue had listened carefully to both sides but remained firmly opposed to the idea of removing the Walton Street barrier at this *stage*. Her reasons were that we were faced with four major crises at this unprecedented time - coronavirus, obesity, damaging air pollution and climate crisis. She never thought she would say this but the government deserved enormous credit for realising that active travel would address all these crises simultaneously. If we wanted to reduce obesity, especially now for people with Covid-19, we needed to encourage people to walk and cycle much more. It was motor traffic which made many cyclists feel unsafe and which made the streets unpleasant for pedestrians, which was one reason why the barrier must stay in place for now. Experts told us that the deaths of about 400 Oxfordshire people each year were attributable to air pollution which was quite shocking and if Walton Street was reopened before the bus gates go in, that would be exacerbated. Oxford had one of the highest rates of Covid-19 in the UK and it was absolutely imperative that we helped people to continue to observe social distancing. The southern half of Walton Street was too narrow for safely distanced cycling with exceptionally narrow pavements. Before the virus struck, pedestrians often stepped into the road when someone was coming the other way or when they wanted to overtake someone. Unfortunately, there was a long stretch where this was not possible, because of parked cars on one side and the old "sunken" section on the other. With no traffic now, most people walked in the road in order not to pass too close to others. However, if the barrier were removed now, it would be virtually impossible at many times of the day to walk or cycle at a safe distance from others. Many people would doubtless opt to stay at home. We have just lived through an awful time and it's not over yet – but some good could come out of it. WW1 led to the equal franchise; WW2 led to the creation of the NHS and the welfare state. Could we derive some benefit from this horrible pandemic by taking this opportunity to radically change our City and to improve our health and our quality of life? Instead of re-opening streets to high volumes of motor traffic again, we need to work with the government to put active travel at the heart of our City and our town centres. We must not go back to square one, with through-traffic pouring along the residential streets of Jericho. This would be to repeat the mistakes of the past, which had led us into this mess. Walton Street should not be reopened until the bus gates were fully operational. We need to stand firm for what we know is right for the health of the people we represent and for all our

children and grandchildren, so that they could have a safe, clean and peaceful life from now on.

County Councillor Emma Turnbull considered it regrettable that after a positive public session only last month, where residents had come together to share their views and engage constructively with the Council, that another decision was potentially going to be imposed again on the community somewhat out of the blue. We had heard from several speakers at the July meeting about the benefits to residents of the barrier: reduced rat-running, lower air pollution and additional space for walking, cycling, shopping and dining. It was regrettable that these benefits could now be removed so suddenly, without any firm commitment as to what the long-term vision for Jericho might actually be. She appreciated the strain that local businesses had been under but did not think that there was any evidence from County Highway surveys that encouraging through-traffic would actually help businesses. Rather, the survey data suggested that it would increase rat-running and thereby discourage local people from venturing out and enjoying what the shops, restaurants and cafes had to offer. She had a number of concerns about this decision:

1. The rushed implementation ahead of the introduction of the bus gates, which she understood was likely to be pushed back to late September or possibly even later in the autumn. No evidence had been provided in the paper about the anticipated impact of the Worcester Street bus gate on Walton St - either if it was left closed, or if the barrier was removed. As far as she knew the position of the bus gate at the Beaumont Street end had not been finalised. That would be crucial for Walton Street, which could easily become an alternative route for traffic through the city centre if the bus gate did not go up to Beaumont Street. No decision should be made to remove the barrier without a final design decision on the temporary bus gate. She did not understand the logic of removing the barrier now.

2 - The paper expressed a desire to consult with residents and traders on a Low-Traffic Neighbourhood scheme. She welcomed that but suspected that that sort of consultation would take many months and then implementation would also take time, so we were looking at a long process and without a firm commitment of funding from the Cabinet Member, this would get pushed into the long grass or quietly dropped.

Therefore, she wanted some sort of guarantee of funding for a LTN scheme before the barrier was removed as without that she feared that residents would lose the benefits of reduced traffic, which was against the whole ethos of the Covid recovery strategy to support local communities and keep people safe by encouraging walking and cycling.

Councillor John Sanders suspected that if we were to reopen the barrier could we be confident of changing behaviour of drivers using St Bernard's Road and Leckford Road. He agreed with the comments made by Councillor Hollingsworth but recognised that there were real problems with regard to funding and officer time to resolve these issues.

Four other statements were read out. They were from:

“Jericho Connections welcoming the recommendation to reopen Walton Street to through traffic. That was good news for the elderly and vulnerable residents who had been particularly impacted by the closure and for our businesses as they looked to rebuild their trade, having suffered the double-impact of the closure and Covid-19. They also hoped it would provide some relief for the residents of Walton Manor, who had borne the brunt of the displaced traffic that the closure caused. If this was the start of new consultation and the Council used the reopening to gather data on road usage and to make informed decisions – something that had been at the heart of our campaign – then they welcomed that and looked forward to engaging with the council in the forthcoming consultation equally alongside other groups and playing an active and constructive role in any consultation. However, they remained extremely concerned about the implementation of proposed bus gates and that once again residents and businesses of Jericho were made the unwilling victims of another “experiment”.”

Jericho Traders’ Association – “business owners were incredibly pleased that Walton Street might be reopened as it would most certainly help trade and deliveries and had been excellent for morale. There were still five shops/restaurants yet to reopen in Jericho but there were concerns that the same problems would be recreated if bus gates were installed. In principle, JTA Committee members were in agreement with the idea of a LTN. However, most Jericho businesses were very much against any pedestrianisation. So far, we know of only 4/44 business owners in Jericho who supported it, but we would get formal responses and report back on that. A number of Jericho business owners had been working on a LTN traffic proposal with supporters of Jericho Connections and had been meeting each Monday in person or on Zoom calls for the last few weeks. A plan had been drawn up that we thought might be able to achieve the right balance and were about to share it with other groups here in Jericho but given the changes announced last week we wanted to revisit that to see whether it still achieved what we set out to do and taking specialist advice.”

Cyclox – “Alison Hill on behalf of Cyclox supported the consultation on the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order placing a barrier at the south end of Walton Street with the expectation that plans would be put forward for creating a low traffic neighbourhood in the Jericho /Walton Manor area. The decision to defer the removal of the barrier that you made earlier in July to give more time to consult made sense but Cyclox were very perplexed, therefore, to hear that only three weeks later the Council was now recommending removal of the barrier and reopening of Walton Street. Removal of the barriers would bring traffic back to Walton Street and they objected to their removal until two conditions are met.

Firstly that bus gates were in place before removal of the barriers. They were in full support of the plan to create experimental bus gates and would be responding to say that shortly. There was presumably still a risk that the County Council would step back from implementing these bus gates and even if implemented their specific location, the hours of operation and the exemptions still had to be worked through.

Secondly that a Jericho Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) plan was designed, fully consulted on, costed and funds identified. Tranche 2 of the Emergency Active Travel Funds could be considered to place temporary road closures but only after community consultation given the heightened tensions in the community.

Cyclox, therefore, objected to removal of the barrier until bus gates had been implemented and plans for an LTN were in place.”

“Mark Johnson-Watts was the proprietor of businesses operating from Beaumont Street and also a resident of Walton Lane. He had submitted the following points:

1 Once the bus gate in Worcester Street was operational the closure at the southern end of Walton Street should be removed. Historic rat-running down Walton Street would not start again because quite simply there would be nowhere to rat-run to with much of the traffic from the southern end of Jericho not being tempted to get out of Jericho via St Bernard's Road hopefully helping the frontagers there who were not happy with the extra through traffic down their road generated by the closure of Walton Street.

2 He understood the desire of the Council to minimise expenditure but the proposal to block all traffic through the Bus Gates lacked ambition and intelligence with adverse consequences that were neither desirable nor necessary. For those like him who had no choice but to frequently drive from the Southern end of Jericho to other parts of Oxford that would at least triple the amount of traffic pollution generated. Since Bus Gates allowed taxis etc relying on ANPR it should be simple to plug in the data already held by the Council from CPZs to permit those in the Centre of Oxford to pass through the gates? Those in these areas fortunate enough to have off street parking could apply to be added to the database having provided evidence of entitlement and paying a fee to enable the Council to carry out this vetting process - much like applying for a parking permit.

3 Longer term ANPR was clearly the way to go as it allowed for a cost-effective method of controlling traffic with precision - down to individual vehicles and individual Bus Gates - that could easily and cheaply evolve with the ever-changing needs of the City. It had been suggested that ANPR was too expensive and that the bus gates would be policed by two Council motor vehicles with on board cameras. If that was the case then the interest costs plus capital cost over the lifetime of the kit should be compared against the costs of providing and staffing two vehicles.”

The Cabinet Member for Environment recognised the views and concerns expressed over the recent turnaround but there had been opportunities to consider a bid for consultation on a local transport neighbourhood as part of the Tranche 2 bid and provision of bus gates, although gates could not be part of the decision today. The most important thing was to recognise that everyone wanted less traffic and that there was a desire to consider new designs and proposals for a LTN bid in the Walton Street area. Although the success of a bid could not be guaranteed she felt it was the right way to go. Only 3 submissions had supported removal with the rest opposing until something else had been put in place. She confirmed that if the experimental order was ended then reconfiguration would not happen until at least 18 August. She noted the great interest from the trader associations but had not been persuaded that through traffic helped the business community and recognised the unhappy effect of displacing traffic and the need to consider mitigation measures for those areas.

Therefore, having regard to the information set out in the report before together with the submissions made to her at the meeting the Cabinet Member for Environment confirmed her decision as follows:

to continue with the experimental order and retain the current road layout and signage pending consultation and progress on a Low Traffic Neighbourhood in the Walton Street area with a further decision on the closure to be made once a design for that has been made, funded and consulted on.

Signed.....
Cabinet Member for Environment

Date of signing.....