

Divisions affected: Eynsham; Witney South and Central

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT – 29 APRIL 2021

WITNEY AND EYNSHAM – PROPOSED BUS STOP BUILD OUTS

Report by Corporate Director, Environment and Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet Member for the Environment is RECOMMENDED to approve the two amended smaller permanent bus stop build outs in Witney and a year trial for the amended bus stop build out in Eynsham.

Background

2. Formal consultation objections were received against proposed bus stop build outs in Witney and Eynsham as reported to the Cabinet Member for Environment Delegated Decisions meeting on 17 December 2020. The proposals answered passenger access concerns and operator needs to improve journey time reliability and help meet the Equality Act (2010) strictures. A decision was deferred to enable further consultations with local County Councillors, parish/town councils and bus operators. This report covers those discussions and makes recommendations

Witney - Corn Street

3. No benefit was seen in further consultation. Thames Valley Police and West Oxfordshire District Council had not objected and Witney Town Council supported the proposals. Similar proposals have been considered for over 10 years against similar objections over parking loss while bus users continue to cite concerns over difficulties in hailing buses due to parked cars. Two vehicles currently park in each stop where no enforcement is possible. This seriously compromises passenger access and totally prevents wheelchair access.
4. It is proposed to reduce the size of the build outs originally due to be 3m wide with tapers giving an overall length of 5.2m and resulting in the likely removal of 4 parking spaces. We now propose 3m wide straight-sided build outs to allow adjacent parking and remove one space per stop at most. While slightly compromising bus user conspicuity it is considered acceptable.

Eynsham – Acre End Street

5. A discussion was held with the bus operator, Parish Council and Local Member. Thames Valley Police and West Oxfordshire District Council had not objected. The Parish Council maintained its objection citing the amended proposals as unacceptable and asked that we talk with local residents before

progressing further. This was achieved through the Local Member's informal consultation. The bus operator also mooted the radical proposal of rerouting the service along Spareacre Lane. The Parish Council and Local Member do not support such a move. While the alternative route is feasible it is not ideal and would reduce the overall service to the community.

6. There was extensive response to the Local Member's consultation with equal support for a build out as opposed to a longer bus bay with two less parking spaces and also an equal balance of views regarding service rerouting. Unfortunately, we do not know whether, as suspected, views were along partisan lines between bus and car users. Concerns remain over congestion and safety at the Acre End Street access but neither of the current options are considered to make a material difference.
7. It is proposed to install a temporary experimental build out to assess the impact on congestion over 12 months. If acceptable it will avoid removal of parking, something requiring formal consultation and likely to be contentious. It would also avoid the anticipated enforcement challenge. Funding will be retained to either make the build-out permanent or remove it and extend the bus-bay (subject to consultation) while widening the existing footway by 0.5m to accommodate bus passenger access and egress. Either option will avoid pressure to reroute the service.

Sustainability objectives

8. The proposals would facilitate the safe and convenient use of buses.

Financial and Staff Implications (including Revenue)

9. The Network Management budget will provide funding.

Equalities Implications

10. No equality implications have been identified in respect of the proposals.

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