

Secretary of State for Transport
c/o National Transport Casework
Team Tyneside House
Skinnerburn Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 7AR

22 February 2017.

Dear Sirs,

**Ref NATTRAN/SW/S249/2636.
Extinguishment of Vehicular Rights Order, Paris Street, Exeter.**

I write on behalf of Exeter Civic Society to object to the closure of this street to through traffic. In previous position as chairman of Exeter Civic Society I wrote a lengthy letter in response to the outline planning application (15/0791/01) for Exeter's bus station site **stating that we objected to the closure of Paris Street** – I attach a copy. Whilst it may be desirable to extend pedestrianisation of Exeter's city centre, the alternative proposed route is torturous and not suitable as a primary route for traffic passing from south to north across the city, especially as this route is also to the city's two primary railway stations.

The proposed alternative vehicular route via Belgrave Road, Summerland Street, York Road, King William Street and Longbrook Street includes three left turns and a right turn against the current position which is direct from Paris Street roundabout to New North Road. King William Street is particularly unsuitable for through traffic because it is winding, and its primary function is currently as a service road for businesses and to access several car parks.

Paris Street has always been a primary route for traffic through the city centre (from its rebuilding after the Second World War) travelling north / south in the city, and as such has a highway classification - the B3183. This is also an important route for those living north of the city in Mid Devon because many people from outside of the city commute to Exeter for work, and many of the major employment centres are to the south of the city.

South bound traffic was diverted from Paris Street several years ago with disastrous effects, causing congestion in York Road and Longbrook Street, and resulting in cars finding alternative routes through residential areas, causing congestion there. The County Council endorsed this change and have since admitted that the alternative route is not suitable, with some the previous changes being reversed as part of this new proposal.

Devon County Council is the local highway authority, and did not raise any objection to the closure of Paris Street (their committee report attached), although they **have not given their approval to the highway changes at committee level**, having delegated this to officers, so the final proposals have not been subject to committee scrutiny in any detail. In the council's paper they accept that following:

*'4.4. **The alternative vehicular route via King William Street is more circuitous and less convenient** for drivers. This is likely to discourage traffic from using the route and adjust their route across the city at an earlier part of the journey (e.g. using Western Way/Exe Bridges for routes to the A377). The submitted analysis assumes that 85% of the existing Paris Street traffic will transfer onto the alternative route. Experience from previous changes to Paris Street in 2005 and in 2012, saw reductions of around 40% - the assumptions are therefore considered suitably robust.'*

In 4.4 above the **report fails to consider that traffic will find an alternative route** via Union Road and Prince of Wales Road. The cited route suffers from significant congestion at Exe bridges, and as an Exonian I would avoid that route.

*'4.19. **It is recognised that the current road network suffers from congestion** during busy periods and particularly at peak times. There will be additional traffic transferred from Paris Street onto alternative routes, therefore a number of changes to the network are proposed by the applicants (see Appendix II).'*

In 4.19, and throughout the council's report, **they fail to consider any increase in traffic as a result of Exeter and neighbouring communities growing**. Congestion will get worse. And in 4.23 below the report confirms the major junction on this route is already operating at capacity – again without considering the city's growth which is inevitable.

*4.23 With increased traffic on the approach from Summerland Street towards York Road, **the signalised junction where the routes meet Sidwell Street becomes the critical junction on the network. The modelling work carried out by the applicants indicates that this junction will operate at capacity** during the weekday peak hours. On occasions queues will occur at this junction, as happens elsewhere on the network. It should be noted that this is based on robust traffic figures and an assumption that a high proportion of traffic switches to Summerland Street. In reality traffic may disperse more widely across the network. Summerland Street itself is of sufficient width and geometry to accommodate additional traffic.*

The council suggest that traffic may disperse elsewhere, but alternative routes are mainly through residential areas. But the problem with the alternative roads is that their available width is reduced by parked cars, making it difficult for two cars to pass safely. And it is disappointing that the County Council does not have any hierarchy of roads within the city for primary or secondary routes (we have asked them for this information without any such information forthcoming), although there are some routes which local people use as primary routes, including Paris Street.

Exeter suffers from significant congestion during the morning and evening rush hour, and sometimes at weekends as a result of people shopping, exacerbated with a swell in shopper numbers in December and during January sales. It is not unusual for traffic in the city centre to become gridlocked by a single incident several miles from the centre on a major arterial route because there are so few alternative routes for cars to use when this happens. The loss of any highway capacity is therefore regrettable unless the alternative route is attractive to car users and directly supports their journey plan – in this case south to north across the city.

I urge you to throw out this proposal.

Yours faithfully

K Lewis

Keith Lewis
For Transport & Highways Sub-Committee