

# Exeter Civic Society

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Registered Charity No: 286932

Devon County Council  
Room 120, Transport Planning  
County Hall, Exeter

By email  
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2 April 2024

Ref.: Exeter Bus Corridor Improvements & Active Travel Crossings

Dear Transport Planning Office,

Our Society welcomes the opportunity to respond to your consultation on both topics. We found it useful to comment with some more detail on the individual questions you set out in the consultation response questions. For this reason, we copied your questions into our letter (in blue colour), and offer our comments in black.

Yours faithfully

*Gert Vonhoff*

Chair, Strategic Planning & Highways Group

Before we come to your questions, please find here some general comments from our Society. We discussed your consultation at a meeting of our 'Strategic Planning & Highways Group'.

Whilst you set out what you hope to be positive improvements for bus travel, we find that you fail to explain what some of the implications may be for other road users, or anything you will do to alleviate this. We find the improvements for the bus traffic flow important also in the context of the Heavitree & Whipton LTN, especially with the potentially added pressure on the boundary roads. We presume that financial reasons will be the reason for these measures being put in place piecemeal rather than a coherent traffic plan.

In some parts of the consultation the long descriptions of what the changes are left us unclear about what is planned or the implications. These could have been better explained with the use of plans and detailed sketches provided elsewhere on your website. The multitude of documents we found confusing.

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Consultation on the other two bus corridors were seemingly undertaken last year, and although we noted the New North Rd/John Lewis proposals, we did not see anything for the Cowick Street proposals.

The current consultation sets out 4 aims for the project, two of which state:

- Create an active travel network that meets the needs of all potential users.
- Accommodate local housing growth and deliver economic benefits for the community.

But we cannot see that all of the proposals adequately achieve this; perhaps **each proposal needs broader consideration of how they benefit or affect people walking, cycling, bussing and driving?**

With the measures suggested in this improvement plan **bus traffic will clearly be prioritised**, sending a strong signal about and daily experience of alternatives in vehicular traffic, something we support. This signal should be as consistent as possible, so we suggest to run the bus lanes 24/7 and not to allow parking in the lane outside operational hours, wherever alternative essential parking is or can be made available. This increased and systematised use of the bus lanes will also benefit bicycle use, as riders can use the less busy lane. To make it safer for cyclists it should be carefully weighed up which other users are allowed into the bus lane. Heavy goods vehicles (lorries, tractors) other than buses impose increased danger to cyclists. Bristol and other cities allow motorcycle and mopeds into their bus lanes. There is currently a nation-wide consultation ongoing for this (DoT, Open Consultation: Motorcycles in bus lanes, published 17 March 2024).

Improvements of the bus stop infrastructure on the Central Bus Corridor, including to shelters and real-time bus information, should not only be considered if enough funding is available. You say these are quick fixes, and the bus users would see a real benefit. Measures like the ones suggested in the last two paragraphs would **support the modal shift** in travelling, which is one of the key objectives of DCC.

## Central Bus Corridor

6. To what extent do you support or oppose the following proposals for the Central Bus Corridor?  
[Introduction of bus priority traffic signals at the end of the Heavitree Road bus lane](#)

**Support.** You say this will affect up to 9 buses per hour out of the 30 buses hourly in each direction. Such an expense for a limited number of buses makes more sense if the priority lights will at the same time enable the outgoing traffic to go ahead into Heavitree Fore Street as well. As we understand it the new priority lights will be overridden by the main traffic lights at the Barrack Road/Polsloe Road and Heavitree Fore Street crossing. It would make sense to model whether the new priority lights can be made to work in unison with the main traffic lights at the crossing, as this way the flow for buses will be increased further. At the same time the left turn lane on Barrack Road could release its traffic onto Heavitree Road.

Generally, though, most buses taking this route are rural buses that may have the opportunity to make up time after leaving the city. The only bus that we are aware of that may not be a local bus is the hospital bus and the Exmouth bus which provides a service to Topsham.

It looks as if there will be a new pedestrian island between the bus lane and the outward bound lane at the end of the extended bus lane on Heavitree Road. This does not look to be a safe crossing point for pedestrians.

[Removal of the existing bus stop at Livery Dole, which would merge this stop with the one at Grendon Road](#)

**Support**, though our members report heavy use of both bus stops and for elderly users constraints to walk further.

[Introduction of an additional northbound lane and bus lane on Barrack Road](#)

**Oppose bus lane**, additional northbound lane seems reasonable, but see our idea for better traffic flow in unison with the priority traffic signal on Heavitree Road. Releasing the traffic in this left-bound lane with more priority will help with the at times large amount of vehicles making this move coming up Barrack Road from the hospital direction. The change will lead to the removal of the not very accessible pavement on the opposite side of the Road, which seems acceptable. There is the added problem of cars approaching the Barrack Road/Magdalen Road crossing not able to proceed in a straight line into the section to the next crossing and needing to change lane again in front of the new very short bus lane. In terms of road safety and providing more space for the straight ahead lane into Polsloe Road **it would make more sense to have the two lanes between the crossings, but without the bus lane, if the road is wide enough to accommodate for this.**

#### **Additional Points**

But what is missing from this proposal is how the cycle route 'nurse's way' from Topsham Road to Stoke Hill will be safely accommodated. This must be spelled out.

With no right turn options from Heavitree Fore Street into Polsloe Road and from Barrack Road into Fore Street, DCC should ensure there is advanced signage to direct people to where they wish to go.

There is also an issue with parking on Polsloe Road where it approaches the Heavitree Road crossing. The limited width of the road often leads to holdups as most vehicular traffic has to pass the parked cars in single file. With Polsloe Road traffic most likely increased as a boundary road for the LTN, what made sense before to slowing traffic down, now no longer makes much sense and only adds to delays, and frustration for those already having to navigate around the LTN. We want to see the in-road-parking be taken out here, and any essential parking provided elsewhere.

The proposal for the central corridor is to improve journeys from Paris St roundabout to Middlemoor, but we have observed that buses exiting Cheeke Street onto Paris Street roundabout are often blocked at the junction by vehicles progressing eastwards to Western Way, or by queuing traffic backing up from the traffic lights alongside the post office sorting office. Is it possible to introduce a yellow box into the roundabout, or part time traffic lights to allow buses and vehicles to exit Cheeke Street?

[7. To what extent do you support or oppose the proposed changes to bus lane operational times for Honiton Road \(Hill Barton Road Overbridge to Ringswell Avenue\)?](#)

[Change to Monday to Saturday 07:00 to 10:00 \(extension of current hours which are Monday to Friday 08:00 to 09:15\).](#)

**Strongly support**, but changing the times for bus only use only in the morning is not sufficient. This route is also congested in the late afternoon with commuters returning to Exeter so there should also be a restriction as proposed for Fore Street from 3PM – 7PM. We think consistency of times would be favourable, as drivers on each corridor then will find it less confusing. As on this stretch of road houses have driveways for parking and there are no shops, it would be possible to have the bus lane there active all the time. Would it make sense to introduce a priority traffic signal at the end of the current bus lane to allow buses advanced access to the crossing?

[8. We propose to make changes to bus lane operational times on Fore Street between Butts Road and Church Street \(extension of current hours which are Monday to Friday 08:00 to 09:30 and 16:00 to 18:30\).](#)

Out of the following options, which would you prefer?

**Option 2: Monday to Saturday 07:00 to 19:00.** This is another example where we think it could be made 24/7 (reasons explained in our introduction). Parking options for visitors need to be explained clearly by signage. There are car parks nearby available (but many do not know about them): off Gordon's Place just behind the shops, and behind the Coop on the other side of the road. This should appease traders. We don't know to what extent the loading bays on this stretch of road are needed, most of the businesses do not seem to receive lots and heavy loads, so may be that can be directed to a new loading bay in Gordon's Place (taken from the width of the road there).

9. Depending on the proposals that are taken forward following the consultation, there are some minor measures that could also be implemented to help improve traffic flow on this corridor. To what extent do you support or oppose the following proposals?

Relocate the loading bay in Fore Street (opposite the petrol station entry point) to allow space for vehicles to pass traffic waiting to turn into the petrol station more reliably when the bus lane is not operational. **Oppose.** DCC need to provide much more information to demonstrate the impact of such a queuing lane. Should public money really be spent on benefiting a private company? Is there an alternative to stop vehicles queuing on the highway? Is the loading bay not needed for local businesses?

Extend the length of the right-hand turn lane on North Street at the junction with Fore Street to facilitate a better flow of traffic. **Oppose.** Unsure whether this is needed. Car hold-ups are relatively short here. And any further lengthening of the right-hand turn lane would mean a shortening of the (currently interrupted) bus lane. This is about priorities, and the one for buses over cars needs to be as clearly made as possible.

Renewal and improvement of the bus lane road markings on Honiton Road. Not very clear what you mean here, but yes **Strongly supported**, if they clarify the road layout.

## Eastern Bus Corridor

10. To what extent do you support or oppose the proposed changes to bus lane operational times for St Marks Avenue bus priority traffic signals to Tarbet Avenue?

Change to Monday to Saturday 07:00 to 10:00 (extension of current hours which are Monday to Friday 08:00 to 9:30).

**Strongly support.** We would, however, also like to see restrictions in the evening 3 to 6 of 7pm; ideally to consider whether this can be made 24/7 as well (for the reasons given in our introductory notes). The level of traffic returning to the city in the evening does lead to congestion so it is surprising this is not being considered. However, there are several businesses in Pinhoe Road east and west of Pamela Road, as well as a doctor's surgery further to the west that currently rely on customers being able to park on Pinhoe Road. DCC should explain where customers will be able to park to visit these businesses. Parking on the north side of Pinhoe Road is not ideal for people due to the volume of traffic, unless additional or improved crossing points are installed.

Parking for businesses already is accommodated in the city-inward direction by roadside parking spaces in front of the shops closer to Polsloe Bridge. The Morrisons convenient shop/Post Office offers a solution for the businesses a bit further up the road, as it has ample space in front of two sides of the shop, which currently is blocked off. Could this be used? We think it is up to businesses to make the most of their available ground and if possible provide their own parking. Alternatively, parking could be provided road side at the exit of Pamela Road, with signage leading traffic to this.

### Additional Point

Do the traffic lights already afford bus priority at St Mark's church? And would it be helpful to have a bus only zone between St Marks Avenue and Cummins Road to enable buses to join queuing traffic towards Mount Pleasant?

11. To what extent do you support or oppose the proposed changes to bus lane operational times for Whipton Community Hall and Widgery Road?

Change to Monday to Saturday 07:00 to 10:00 (extension of current hours which are Monday to Friday 08:00 to 9:30).

**Strongly support.** We would, however, also like to see restrictions in the evening 3 to 6 of 7pm; ideally to consider whether this can be made 24/7 as well (for the reasons given in our introductory notes). Currently most vehicles do not venture into the bus lane outside of the restricted hours and the highway seems quite able to cope with the volume of traffic with just one lane, unless evidence shows otherwise. From Vranth House School to Widgery Road there is no reason why the bus lane should not operate permanently because there are no homes or business located along the route. The length of bus lane from Whipton Community Hall to Vranth House runs along a residential stretch of the road, but the houses have their own drive ways for parking.

#### **Additional Point**

In respect of the changes to bus times, we cannot see that these proposals will improve bus times in the current restricted period, and only for buses travelling in the new extended restricted period. And we do not understand how bus journey times outbound will be improved because none of the changes appear to create any improvements to bus times. We guess this time improvements must be down to more intelligent and responsive signalling? See last point under 12.

12. To complement the above proposals for both the Central and Eastern Bus Corridors, a range of smart technology measures will be implemented. To what extent do you support or oppose the following measures?

**Adaptive traffic control solutions including using CCTV cameras to monitor both junctions and corridor operations. Support.** This seems reasonable as long as DCC does not expect the traffic enforcement system to be a means of generating revenue.

**Variable Message Signs (VMS) to inform drivers about real-time traffic conditions, journey times for the corridor, and congestion data. Oppose.** For this to be effective the signs need to be at the start of each end of the two corridors to give drivers advanced information about congestion, but it should be noted that both corridors are very busy at peak times so directing traffic from one to the other will make the other corridor much more congested. DCC need to model the consequences of this, including along the roads that link the two routes. With many streets alongside of these corridors either being a LTN or quiet streets, there is little alternative than the two main corridors.

**Improving signal-controlled sites with bus priority technology to extend green signals for buses and decrease waiting times. Strongly support.** This seems to be the main measure to decrease travelling times where there are not bus lanes available. Ideally you would have bus lanes in both directions on the artery roads, but due to limited width this is not possible.

## **Honiton Road Active Travel Improvements**

13. To what extent do you support or oppose the proposed changes to upgrade the existing signalised toucan crossing on Honiton Road to a sparrow crossing? A sparrow crossing would allow people walking and cycling to cross the road separately from one another. This would create a safer and more intuitive route for people walking and cycling through the Honiton Road / Rifford Road / Sweetbriar Lane junction.

**Strongly support.** This seems a good improvement. The segregated cycle path on the Sweetbriar Lane side should be positioned not next to the road, but on the other side of the pedestrian walkway so there is no conflict with pedestrians waiting to cross Sweetbriar Lane. This then means the lanes for pedestrians and bicycles will have to switch on the other side of Honiton Road as well, in order to create a straight crossing line for cycles again. The benefit of the change on this side would be that the cycle lane is next to the road, providing more safety for pedestrians and keeping the bikes next to the road on the shared path on the corner.

#### **Additional Point**

We would like to see a significantly improved and segregated cycle path established from Sycamore Close to this crossing point – surely there must be funding for this to link Sweetbriar Lane cycle path to the Rifford Road cycle route rather than to have shared paths. The area where this segregated

stretch could be built is a grassy patch with a few trees. If need be the cycle path can wind around the trees. There is a similar issue on the south side of the crossing with a shared path linking to the new Rifford Road cycle path at Quarry Lane.

## **Polsloe Bridge Active Travel Scheme OPTION 1**

14. To what extent do you support or oppose the proposed installation of a diagonal toucan crossing on Pinhoe Road?

A toucan crossing is signalised and would allow people cycling and walking to safely cross the carriageway at the same time.

**Strongly support.** We prefer this option because it offers a wide and direct route for the cycle path. Arguments that such a diagonal crossing would not be safe for people with impaired vision are to be taken seriously though. And for this reason, we suggest to install a sound signal on the lights to assist the direction of crossing.

We presume DCC have the ability to acquire the land at the front of the Queens Head to enable the widened pavement. This would only marginally impede the parking space for the pub.

15. To what extent do you support or oppose the introduction of a shared-use pathway and segregated cycle path on Hamlin Lane?

New footway construction on Hamlin Lane would create a shared-use space as well as a two-way segregated cycle path that connects with the Hamlin Lane Playing Fields car park. The shared-use space would avoid potential conflict issues around the Hamlin Lane crossing and would reduce demand on the existing footways under the bridge.

**Strongly support.** This is necessary to support option 1 at Posloe Bridge and we support it as long as appropriate signage is installed to alert people to cyclists, especially for those exiting the steps from the station. We would suggest installing railings shielding the pedestrian/cycle areas off the road, especially on the corner of Pinhoe Road and Hamlin Lane, to discourage the crossing of Hamline Lane too close to the corner. The existing pedestrian lights at the crossing of Pinhoe Road with Beacon Avenue will have to work in line with the newly to be installed ones. They are still needed to support the local shops on either side of this section of Pinhoe Road.

## **Polsloe Bridge Active Travel Scheme OPTION 2**

16. To what extent do you support or oppose the creation of a new toucan crossing on Pinhoe Road?

The proposed Toucan crossing would have minimal impact on the proposed bus improvement measures and would allow people walking and cycling to cross the carriageway safely at the same time.

**Strongly oppose.** This is a poor proposal which does nothing to support improved pedestrian and cycle movements. It further decreases the already limited space under the bridge, where higher vehicles have to move partly into the opposite lane.

17. To what extent do you support or oppose the widening of the existing footway on the northern and southern sides of Pinhoe Road to provide a shared-use space?

A shared-use space can be used by people walking, cycling and jogging.

**Strongly oppose.** This is linked to suggestion 16, which we oppose. Shared-use spaces easily produce conflicts between different modes of use.

18. To what extent do you support or oppose the introduction of a shared-use area and advisory cycle lane on the south side of Pinhoe Road?

This would allow people cycling to safely transition between the shared path onto the road.

**Strongly oppose.** To have a cycle space in the already too narrow road does not make it any safer for the cyclists; the only advantage would be the priority box for cyclists at the traffic light crossing that



would enable cyclists to pull away on the road in front of the cars. But to reach this dedicated space, presumably dangerous cycle moves would be needed.

19. Taking your answers to questions 14 - 18 into account, which of the two options for Polsloe Bridge Active Travel Scheme would you prefer?

**Option 1**

**Please explain why:** This looks like the safest option in this limited space. It would give priority to E12. And it would not provide a false sense of priority for the cyclists using this dangerous stretch of Pinhoe Road in the city-inward direction.

**Comments**

20. If you have any further comments about the proposals, please write them in the box below. See Exeter Civic Society's general comments in the introductory section of our letter.