



Heavitree & Whipton Active Streets Trial

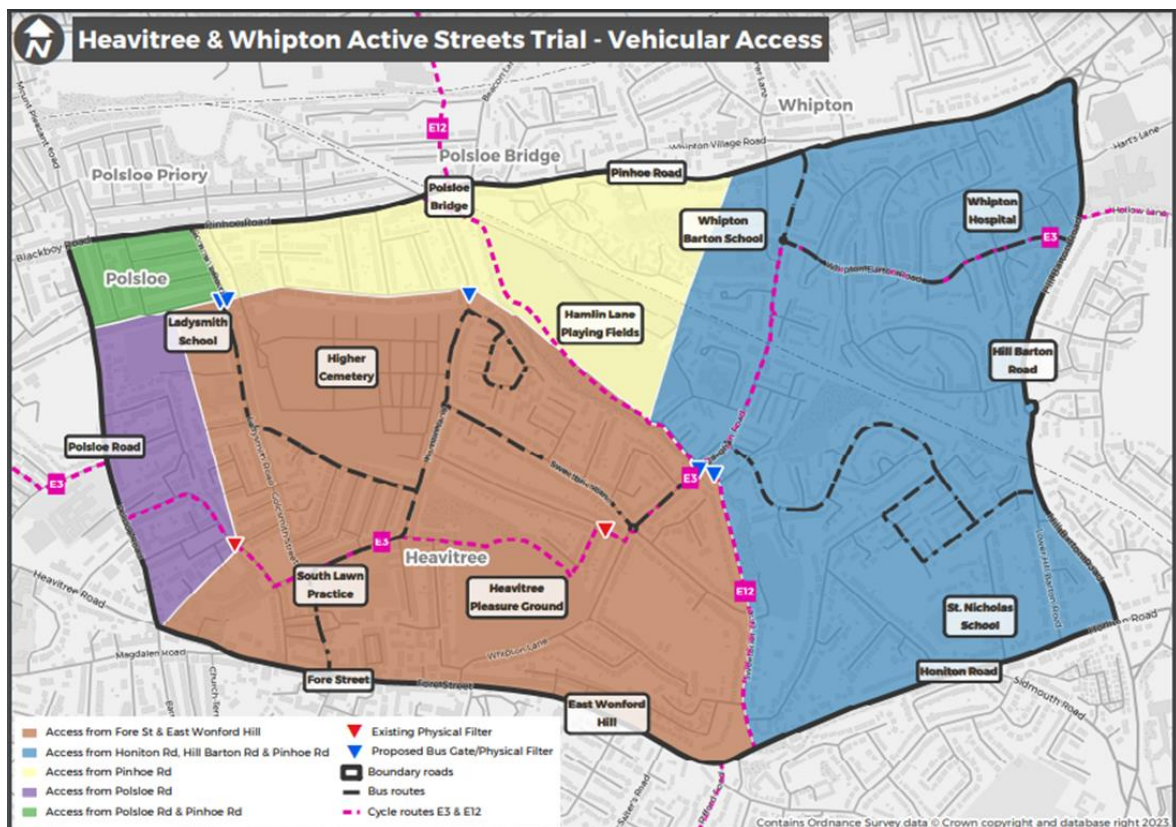
Consultation Response May 2024

Introduction.

- A. The Society exists to monitor development in the city and to challenge that which is not well considered. One of our constitutional objectives is to promote high standards of planning and architecture in or affecting the city, and as the city has become increasingly congested we have also turned our attention towards the planning of highways and their management in an endeavour to see less traffic on the roads, and a pleasanter environment for all using our streets.
- B. We support the principle of Low Traffic Networks where they help to reduce congestion in the city and improve people's lives. However, we accept that for many the use of a vehicle, van or bus is essential, and for others a necessary convenience. We wish to see an efficient arterial highway network across the city that supports traffic movements and reduces congestion; ensuring roads allow all modes of traffic to move freely and safely, with a clear preference of vehicular commuter and through traffic on arterial roads rather than in residential areas.
- C. The current Exeter Transport Strategy has agreed a target of 50% of trips within the city being made on foot or by bike, but the streets do not allow for segregated cycle lanes which are now regarded as standard. This all sits in the context where ECC and DCC have declared Climate Emergency and agreed on plans to reach net zero which now need to be implemented.
- D. We have monitored this trial from before its commencement in 2023 and monitored reports to Exeter HATOC. We are pleased that adjustments were made in the autumn of 2023 to allow certain vehicles through the bus gates, and we hope that over time, those needing to access the area will become aware of any permanent changes made at the end of the trial. With so many drivers now relying on GPS mapping, including emergency services and professional drivers, we expect that these systems will be updated in due course to support those less familiar with any changes to the streets.
- E. We hope that this response, which is informed by mixed observations from our members who are affected by the LTN, offers a balanced view about the trial and how some changes may help to make the LTN acceptable to the majority of residents living in the area and those living outside of the area who are affected by it.

- F. Other than areas of the city that are already protected from through-traffic through their design as small estates and cul-de-sacs, the city already has two designed LTNs at Newtown and the Barton Road of St Thomas. Both of the above areas are relatively small and as stated, access to the arterial road network and facilities is a short distance. This is in contrast with the Heavitree and Whipton LTN which is extensive resulting in significantly longer journeys for people who need to use a car to get to some destinations when the journey was previously relatively short and direct. We provide more information in the final section of this response.
- G. We recognise that the intentions of the trial are to stop through traffic from outside of the area causing disruption and pollution in residential areas, and to encourage and allow local people to walk, cycle and scoot more safely to local amenities such as schools and shops. We have heard that people are pleased that their street has become quieter with the LTN in place: they say they now can sleep in their front bedrooms with windows open in the warmer months; they say they feel more encouraged to walk, and they say for a first time for a long time they have the feeling their street is not just there for cars, we are also aware of a large number of people that are against the proposals, but not their reasons for this.
- H. We hope that final recommendations by DCC will be largely informed by local people living in the area who have made constructive comments towards either retaining the LTN, adjusting it, or possibly scrapping part or all of. We hope that this will be based upon qualitative comments rather than quantitative representation.

Our Observations of the current LTN and Suggested Changes



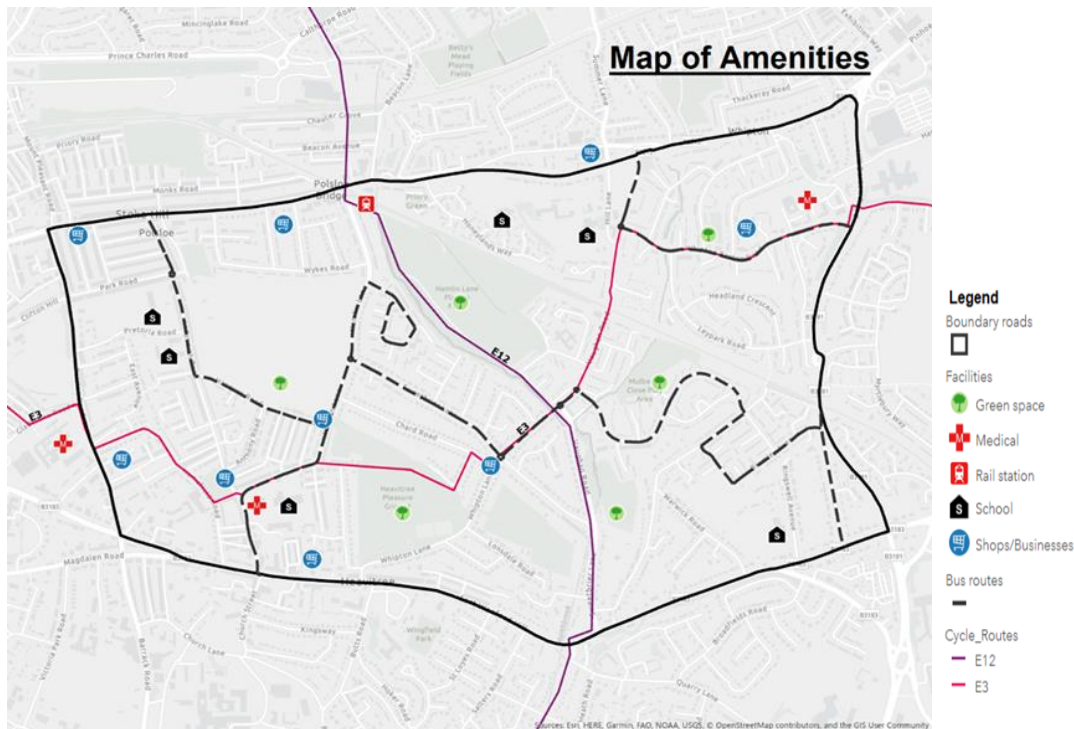
1. The current LTN prevents traffic moving between the Pinhoe Road to the Heavitree Road corridor, with the majority of residents now having to access the arterial road network via the Heavitree Road corridor. The current restrictions consist of a bus gate on Ladysmith Road; a road closure on Hamlin Lane; a bus gate on Whipton Lane; and a road closure on Vaughan Road. However, our members have observed cars driving both directions through the bus gates, ignoring the blue restriction signs indicating a right of way for cyclists, buses, taxis and authorised vehicles. **We hope that DCC will introduce cameras at bus gates to police those infringing any permanent arrangements.**
2. Research shows that streets are much more attractive for cycling and walking when fewer than 2,500 vehicles pass down a street each day. The "through" roads of Heavitree and Whipton were at or above that level, are now well below, and rates of cycling and walking are well up (more than doubling - numbers in the DCC reports to HATOC). Whilst we recognise that prior to the trial through traffic contributed to some congestion and nuisance within the LTN area at peak times, some of our members report that during the majority of the day traffic levels within the LTN were low. **We would like to see evidence of the 'traffic' count and how and when it was recorded, especially any recording before the trial when DCC publishes its final report. The provision of detailed and accurate data relating to the trial period (at least a year) should be published to demonstrate the impact of the trial in a timely manner, both positive and negative issues, including air quality, traffic levels on peripheral roads, the impact on public transport.**
3. The current trial area is very large and many people may be disadvantaged by having much longer journeys along the arterial roads of Posloe Road, Pinhoe Road, Hill Barton Road and the Heavitree Road corridor. The county council's short survey results in the autumn of 2023 seem to suggest that the number of journeys on these arterial roads has increased, although we believe that should be expected with people mainly living outside of the area having to drive around the area to get to their destination, such as the RD&E. **We think that any assessment of traffic numbers and movements does need to be for the same period year on year to demonstrate real change. We also believe that known factors such as roadworks should be noted when reporting figures.**
4. Some road blockages have been previously been installed to stop through traffic and to support cycle routes; namely Roseland Avenue which has created a cul-de-sac; Homefield Road at its junction with Bonnington Grove which has resulted in quieter streets between North Avenue and Bicton Place, and possibly on Homefield Road; and on Chard Road at its junction close to Whipton Lane, which has stopped through traffic but presumably has resulted in longer journeys to access some arterial roads. **It would be useful to know if residents were happy with these small changes before the LTN trial started.**
5. We have heard of reports of delivery vehicles being disadvantaged because of longer journeys, as well as people visiting friends in the LTN and carers who now have a longer journey. **We hope this will be a short-term issue during the trial and that once permanent arrangements are put in place, with or without amendments, all visitors to the area will become familiar with them.**
6. We have been advised that traffic leaving the LTN in the morning rush hour period on North Street has resulted in long tail backs from the Fore Street traffic lights, increasing congestion in

that area. This may be compounded by a number of pupils attending local schools from outside of the local area by car. **We wonder if DCC's school transport team can work with the schools and parents to find alternative means of travelling to the school.**

7. Having quieter roads where schools are located is clearly an advantage, so reduced traffic on Ladysmith Road for the Infants and junior schools is supported. However, restricting vehicle travel northwards on Ladysmith Road has resulted in more cars turning at the gates of the two primary schools, potentially causing accidents. **We wonder if some adjustments to the schools' entrances and the highway are necessary to manage this.**
8. We are advised that South Lawn Terrace, where St Michael's Academy Primary School is located with the Health Centre next door, is not any quieter and possibly busier, possibly because residents cannot commute north towards Pinhoe Road. With the observation that there is more traffic travelling on North Street and therefore South Lawn Terrace, **we wonder whether a pedestrian crossing on South Lawn Terrace will assist people to travel from the residential area to the school, health centre and onwards to Heavitree shops.**
9. Residents have advised that access to Higher Cemetery from the three neighbouring roads needs to be considered as part of the LTN arrangements to discourage parking in the cemetery. **Whilst St Marks Avenue has limited parallel parking, the road is wide enough for organising more efficient parking such as end on rather than parallel, but that needs careful thought to avoid cars backing into cyclists. Should limited parking arrangements be introduced on Hamlin Lane to support visiting the cemetery?**
10. Traffic from the LTN wishing to travel to Pinhoe Road may wish to do so via Posloe Road, but traffic cannot turn into Posloe Road at the main junction with Heavitree Road; vehicles then carry on to Grendon Road to turn right to join Posloe Road at the earliest possibility. The traffic light junction at Gladstone Road is much safer, but a lot don't use it. **DCC should review traffic flows on Grendon Road to decide whether it should be one-way, or 'no right turn' from Heavitree Road, and introduce signage for access to Pinhoe Road.**
11. We wonder if the blockage on Hamlin Lane between Wykes Road and Hamlin Gardens is in the right place. Do people in the Hamlin Gardens area use the local services in the Posloe Bridge area rather than Heavitree, and do they really want to drive to the Heavitree corridor rather than Pinhoe Road to access the arterial road network? **Notwithstanding the need for a turning area, would a blockade at the junction with Sweetbrier Lane be better?**
12. Likewise, do the people living on the central part of Vaughan Road and in Vaughn Rise prefer to have access to Whipton shops rather than access shops in Heavitree? **Should the blockade here be relocated to support people's preferences?**
13. **Bearing in mind the large number of people who are unhappy with the current arrangements, we wonder whether at least one through road should be opened up to traffic between Pinhoe Road and Heavitree to allow people living in the area an opportunity to access either of the two arterial roads for onward journeys and shops, leisure and medical facilities, and places of**

work. This would also help to decrease traffic on arterial roads around the LTN which are also residential along much of their length.

14. The route that will impact the LTN area least between Pinhoe Road and the Heavitree Road corridor is Vaughan Road/Sweetbrier Lane because it is on the eastern edge of the LTN area rather than through it and not heavily populated. From Pinhoe Road, Vaughan Road is wide with homes set back from the highway to its junction with Whipton Lane, with many homes separated from the highway by wide verges or hedges. The railway bridge narrowing of the highway contributes towards traffic calming but could benefit from improved visibility and priority signing. From the junction with Whipton Lane to Sweetbrier Lane there is housing only on one side of the road which is also set back from the highway, and if on-street parking can be removed traffic should flow well. The wide grass verge can provide an extension of the E12 cycle route. The Sweetbrier Lane section to Honiton Road is wide enough for two-way traffic if on-street car parking is also removed but an additional block at the east end of Sweetbrier Lane may be necessary to prevent through traffic entering the LTN from the Pinhoe Road area, or a 'no right turn' introduced to ensure traffic accesses the LTN from the Heavitree corridor. **This proposal would affect few homes (far less than those living on the arterial peripheral roads affected by increased traffic), and offer residents of the LTN a shorter route to Pinhoe Road or the Heavitree corridor, and offer a shorter route between these roads for those living outside the area but wishing to travel across it.**
15. Would it be acceptable for vehicles to pass 'out' of the LTN area through bus gates? Whilst we accept that there should be restrictions to stop restricted vehicles entering the LTN, it may be helpful if all vehicles are allowed to leave the area, even if this may allow some vehicles to travel through the LTN. To discourage this, routes through the LTN should be made unattractive by using localised barriers and possibly one way roads. Appropriate traffic monitoring cameras would be needed to enforce an outward only direction of vehicles.
16. With a large number of terrace homes in the western part of the LTN area, we wonder how many homes have space for bicycles for children and adults, as well as a rear access where they may access their homes and bike storage. If an LTN is to encourage and enable more people to cycle, then adequate cycle provision must be developed. **Do on-street cycle stores need to be introduced where homes are predominantly terraced so people have access to bike storage and are encouraged to cycle?**
17. There are not many businesses in the LTN area, but it is important that they are not adversely affected by the restrictions to an extent that they may close or relocate. Have the needs of local small businesses been considered? Robinsons News (South Lawn Terrace), for instance, has suffered a drastic fall in income through loss of passing trade since the Ladysmith Road change, so much so that it has written to its standing customers asking them to consider making as much use of its business as they can. A localised campaign to support local business, and encourage people to shift to shopping closer to home may help.



18. **We hope DCC will model the possible impact on residential roads both inside and outside of the LTN area where the proposed changes could lead to possible rat-running.** As an example, during rush hours Monks Road increasingly has become a substitute for Pinhoe Road. The ‘LTNs and modal filters map’ is a useful tool which we expect DCC is familiar with.
<https://www.lowtrafficneighbourhoods.org/map/modalfilters,ltns/#13.54/50.7219/-3.49452>

Additional Observations and Thoughts for the wider area.

- Those in favour of the LTN are clearer about what they wish from the trial, most importantly, running it for the whole 18 months and collecting appropriate statistics from DCC (travel patterns, traffic counts) and ECC (air quality) as a foundation for the concluding evaluation. Concerns about the number of people being injured in the area (e.g. Sweetbrier Lane / Whipton Lane roundabout and near Ladysmith school) indicate that residents thought there was too much traffic and not enough provision for cycling and walking in the area. **The Heavitree and Whipton LTN must be part of a wider solution for commuting traffic, such as commuter hubs on the edge of Exeter and alternatives to individual vehicular traffic into the city (such as improved bus services, bike storage facilities at the hubs, better use of and accessibility of existing rail stations).**
- The responses to the trial are clearly mixed, with many vociferous objectors making their objection clear. In an effort to understand their concerns we have met with a leading member from the objectors and discovered that not all object to the principles of the LTN (such as better street life). The way this LTN has been set up has upset many residents, especially where the quality of dissenting opinion in the area was not adequately recognised by DCC, and the specifics of the demography of the population in the area (with almost 1/3 no longer actively working) considered in all its facets. **The ability of older people to engage in active travel**

should be considered in DCC's final report. What can DCC suggest to support people who are less mobile?

- c) Whilst people are being encouraged to use their cars less and walk and cycle more, there is no evidence that the county council will invest in the area to improve the poor quality of some pavements and pedestrian crossing points, or improve the local environment through greening streets and improving routes from homes to facilities and amenities. **Would such an approach provide real benefits for local people?**
- d) **We wonder whether additional crossing points could be added to the arterial roads to assist people walking, cycling or scooting?** As an example, a crossing between South Avenue and Gladstone Road will enable people from the LTN area access Waitrose supermarket, the hospital and buses on Heavitree Road.
- e) The traffic on Heavitree Road at its junctions with Church Street and North Street is reported to be much heavier now (since before the trial) and drivers ignore the large box junctions and continue on these even when they have to then stop and wait within the box junctions. **When the lights change in favour of pedestrians, one can never be sure if drivers will wait whilst pedestrians cross the road, or if they expect to have right of way.**
- f) We feel that main and arterial roads and boundary roads need to be made as free flowing as possible. No parking in the road where this reduces the road width to less than two vehicles passing in opposite directions (all issues where the middle line is taken out for this reason, as in Polsloe Road). **The level of parking at the curb side should be reduced except where it will still allow safe two-way traffic movements.**
- g) We think it is difficult to make a realistic assessment of the impact of the trial while the bus services are so below pre-lockdown levels. Anecdotal information suggests that the uncertainty of when buses will arrive mean some people wish to use their cars for journeys that would once have been easy by bus. Whilst there have been some recent improvements, these need to be built upon.
- h) **Gear Change, published by the Department of Transport in 2020 and still current policy, allows low traffic neighbourhood schemes as alternatives to segregated cycle tracks on main roads.** Below are two extracts supporting such proposals.

There will be less rat-running and many more low-traffic neighbourhoods

Residential side streets across the country can be blighted by rat-running. Low-traffic neighbourhoods will be created in many more groups of residential streets by installing point closures – for example, bollards or planters – on some of the roads. It would still be possible to access any road in the area, but motor traffic would not be able to use the roads as through routes. Streets within low traffic neighbourhoods will provide clear, direct routes for cyclists and pedestrians promoting walking and cycling. Accidents, pollution and noise will be dramatically reduced for residents.

We will consult on creating a community right to close side streets and create low-traffic neighbourhoods, with groups of residential side streets able to petition local authorities for rat-run closures.

Contraflow cycling, where cyclists are allowed to ride against the direction of travel on lightly-trafficked one-way streets, has worked well in both residential and non-residential areas. This should be the default on all quieter one-way streets with certain minor exceptions. Appropriate signage will be required. Contraflow cycling without physical protection will not be appropriate on busier one-way streets.

We will create cycle, bus and walking corridors, closing a limited number of main roads to through traffic except for buses and access

A quicker way of providing safe, low-traffic cycling is to close roads to through traffic, usually with simple point closures, such as retractable bollards, or by camera enforcement. This may be useful where the road is too narrow for a segregated cycle lane. The closure would only affect through traffic. Residents, visitors, or delivery drivers needing to reach anywhere along the road would still be able to do so – though they might have to approach from a different direction.

For example, a small number of routes from key suburbs into a city could become bus and cycling corridors, while the other main roads remained through routes for motorists.

Side-street routes, if closed to through traffic to avoid rat-running, can be an alternative to segregated facilities or closures on main roads – but only if they are truly direct.

For directness it will often be necessary to mix the two, with stretches on back streets joined to segregated stretches on the main road and across junctions where there is no sufficiently direct side street. Routes that are not truly direct and are not closed to through traffic will not be funded. Linking direct routes to out-of-centre car parks would encourage opportunities for 'park and pedal' and 'park and walk' travel options.

Previous LTNs in the City

- i) Newtown's LTN started small with just Sandford Walk and East John Walk being established as pedestrian friendly streets, and more recently, a traffic barrier was established at the junction of Parr Street and Chute Street to stop through traffic. However, there are roads that allow through traffic, notably Clifton Road, Portland Street and Clifton Street.

- j) The LTN at Barton Road was established to stop rat-running between Cowick Lane and Cowick Street and consists of barriers on Barton Road and some one-way roads which have resulted in quieter streets at peak times. Some journeys in the area will be longer but distances to the main arterial road network and shops is short in most cases. St Thomas as a district centre is well known for its high levels of walking to local facilities.

Keith Lewis

Chairman