

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

By email
transportplanning@devon.gov.uk

10 October 2024

Ref.: Exeter Bus Service Improvement Plan

Dear Transport Planning Office,

Our Society welcomes the opportunity to respond to your consultation on the 'Exeter Bus Service Improvement Plan'. ECS discussed your proposals at their 'Strategic Planning & Highways Group' meeting on 9 Oct 2024. 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 suggestions into our letter (in blue colour), and offer our comments in black. We also submitted our answers via your online form. We used the 'oppose' box for the first two answers, as there was no 'support, but' box.

Yours faithfully

Gert Vonhoff

Chair, Strategic Planning & Highways Group

Before we come to your questions, a few words about our more general concerns we raised in our consultation response on 2 April 2024.

We wrote in April:

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.

We see that suggestion about making the bus lanes safer for cyclists by not allowing Heavy Goods Vehicles in them as exemption is followed, and that the exemption now includes car club vehicles, an incentive to move away from private car ownership. We welcome these decisions as good progress. But as the texts are laid out, it is not clear that these changes will be valid for all bus lanes. Clarifications for the Heavitree Road, Pinhoe Road and Honiton Road bus lanes are needed: Draft order 6193 should follow the text in draft orders 6191, 6195 and 6197.

Devon County Council (Fore Street Area, Heavitree, Exeter) (Waiting Restrictions) Order ENV ID: 6192

The proposal for Fore Street, Heavitree is to amend the times of operation of the bus lane to provide greater priority for buses to pass queuing traffic during the daytime (7am to 7pm Monday to Saturday) when they are currently experiencing delays. Modifications to the waiting and loading restrictions within the bus lane are also proposed to match the new timings. The parking in North Street is also being shortened to allow the traffic lanes to be widened on the exit onto Fore Street which will improve capacity and bus movements out of the junction.

Exeter Civic Society in general supports this proposal, but we have a concern. We find that businesses on this stretch of Fore Street are not unnecessarily impacted by the loss of daytime parking (waiting) in the bus lane. Parking in Gordons Place and behind the local Coop provide alternatives which look suitable for business users. But the loss of the loading areas between 7 am and 7 pm will impact local shops existentially where they do not have access from behind. We therefore ask to allow loading in all NL3 areas between 11am to 2pm; this will generate a delivery slot during daytime hours.

We welcome the exemptions for cycles, taxis and private hire vehicles (permit holders) for using the bus lane. Does this include car club vehicles? And does this mean HGV are kept out?

Devon County Council (Heavitree Road, Exeter) (Waiting Restrictions) Order ENV ID: 6194

Here the introduction has the wrong description copied in.

Exeter Civic Society in general supports this proposal, but we have a concern. Introducing residents parking in front of 158-162 Heavitree Road and giving up the bus stop in front of 158 Heavitree Road sends the wrong signal. It does not support the shift from private car to bus use your measures overall try to introduce. We suggest leaving this stretch as it currently is laid out, especially as Stagecoach has cancelled a route along Magdalene Street; residents of the area are now more dependent on the Heavitree Road bus link and need the bus stop there, as they otherwise will have to walk down to opposite Waitrose.

We are unclear about the exemptions for using the bus lane: we would welcome cycles, taxis and private hire vehicles (permit holders), but not HGVs using the bus lane.

Devon County Council (Pinhoe Road, Exeter) (Waiting Restrictions) Order ENV ID: 6196

The proposal for Pinhoe Road is to amend the times of operation of the bus lane to provide greater priority for buses to pass queuing traffic during the peak times when they are currently experiencing delays. Modifications to the waiting and loading restrictions within the bus lane are also proposed to match the new timings.

Exeter Civic Society fully supports this proposal. To have the bus corridor Mon to Sat 7 to 10 am, with waiting and loading outside these hours provides enough support for the local businesses. We hope to understand correctly that the exemptions do not include HGVs.

Devon County Council (Honiton Road, Exeter) (Waiting Restrictions)
Order ENV ID: 6198

The proposal for Honiton Road is to amend the times of operation of the bus lane to provide greater priority for buses to pass queuing traffic during the peak times (Monday to Saturday) when they are currently experiencing delays. Modifications to the waiting and loading restrictions within the bus lane are also proposed to match the new timings.

Exeter Civic Society fully supports this proposal. We hope to understand correctly that the exemptions do not include HGVs.