

Council
18 February 2019

Public Questions (3 total)

1.	Question from Linda Hope to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	Cheltenham has a unique Regency Character that has attracted visitors for decades. Are the council really giving enough consideration to preserving this as the recent developments around Boots Corner are ugly, driving in is impossible and parking non-existent.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>One of the tenets of the Cheltenham Transport Plan was to learn from previous mistakes and thus there was a commitment that in delivering any change, there wouldn't be any significant alterations to roads or demolition of buildings, as occurred with the road widening at St Margaret's many years ago.</p> <p>The works at Boots' Corner are only temporary and whilst I agree that 'astroturf' may not be to everyone's taste, the works have demonstrated that by removing through traffic and creating enhanced public space, more people are using that space and staying longer.</p> <p>The recent Business Improvement District survey prior to Christmas, which was carried out independently by Enventure Research, identified that '<i>... Almost nine in ten (88%) respondents said that it was very easy (51%) or quite easy (37%) to travel through or around Cheltenham</i>' – suggesting the view that driving is impossible is not supported empirically.</p> <p>The Cheltenham Transport Plan has not resulted in the loss of any parking in the town and data suggests that parking patronage remains positive. GCC has also created additional blue badge bays on-street to over-compensate for those spaces removed as part of the trial.</p>
2.	Question from Adam Lillywhite to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>Despite repeated and strenuous denials by Cllr McKinley that the reason for keeping Boots Corner closed is not the potential development of the Municipal offices, Q36 of the public question from the public questions of 21/1/2019 clearly identifies the high priority rated 16 and rated red in the Task Force risk register,</p> <p><i>"If GCC are unable to close Boots Corner (inner Ring Road) to through traffic then it would significantly reduce the development potential of the Municipal Building and Royal Well and may render the development as Marginal, as it would only allow the Municipal Building to be remodelled without the holistic benefit of Royal Well."</i> (Ref Cheltenham Task Force risk TF. 12)</p> <p>Given the extensive Economic and Environmental case presented to Councillors in the extraordinary meeting on 21st Feb and the officer who wrote the CTP update report being the MD of the task force, will you please outline why this Risk was not presented to the Councillors or included in the risk assessment, Appendix 1 of that meeting.</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member

	<p>The development potential for the Municipal Offices includes the opportunity to create some world class public space, but this can only be seriously considered if the town embraces traffic removal as a precursor.</p> <p>We are not yet at that stage, as the Cheltenham Transport Plan has been delivered in a phased manner, so there seems little point in flagging risks relating to a separate project that may never materialise.</p>
3.	<p>Question from Adam Lillywhite to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay</p> <p>At the Extraordinary Council meeting 21/1/2019 I asked a supplementary question <i>'Why are the officers of this council so intent on masking the adverse impacts of the Boots Corner scheme whilst at the same time accentuating any potential benefits from developments many of which are unrelated to the phase 4 closure.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. The Boots Corner usage table is totally misleading, increase figures are only reported for the period of the Music and Literature festivals against a base that was not during a festival.</i> <i>2. The detailed data for traffic flows has not been released, traffic increase graphics exclude the street probably most heavily affected, St Georges Street.</i> <i>3. The Nitrogen Dioxide map is for 2017, so is not relevant.</i> <i>4. Serious detrimental impacts on residential areas are dismissed or not addressed.</i> <i>5. Economic activity from completed developments separate to the closure are inaccurately claimed as being dependent.</i> <p><i>How can CBC members or the public be expected to make a reasonable decision without the necessary information and from a report that is so blatantly intended to mislead them?'</i></p> <p>In response the Cabinet Member said he did not agree with my analysis and Members had all the relevant information required.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member now has the time to investigate the five points raised and I would be grateful for a response to each one.</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Boots Corner footfall data and methodology is publically available at https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/47/cheltenham_development_task_force/1452/boots_corner_trial_closure_data <p>The dates for which data has been collected are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Week 1 commencing 11th June; - Week 2 commencing 2nd July; - Week 3 commencing 8th October; - Week 4 commencing 14th November (not yet analysed or published) <p>Unsurprisingly, there were events taking place during all of these weeks, that's the nature of life in Cheltenham:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Week 1: food and drink festival 15-17th June; - Week 2: Music festival, Midsummer fiesta on 7th July; - Week 3: Literature festival, Promenade market on 12th October;

- Week 4: November Races 16-18th November.

In all cases, it's difficult to assess the impact of the events on Boots' Corner at the times sampled (the hours beginning 8 a.m., 12.30 p.m. and 5 p.m.). For example, with the Literature Festival focussed on Montpelier Gardens, would that lead to a positive or negative impact on the footfall around Boots' Corner?

There are many other 'external' factors which impact the counts, e.g. the World Cup was taking place during the second week and there is evidence of a drop in footfall coinciding with England games; the weather, whilst generally good, deteriorated markedly during the last days of the third week.

So, in order to try to provide a balanced view, we have commissioned surveys covering a number of weeks and averaged out post-closure data across all the weeks sampled. And that's also why we have sampled three periods during the day and looked at individual periods separately to look for inconsistencies in the data.

We are currently analysing data for the week commencing 14th November and expect to be able to release that soon. Again there will be differences in the underlying conditions – for example, John Lewis had opened by this date, other major shops had opened / re-opened and, of course Christmas was approaching. On the other hand days were colder and darker.

2. We await the release of the raw data by colleagues from GCC and will request this.

3. The map and data is updated in line with DEFRA guidance and we anticipate the 2018 data being uploaded shortly.

4. The GCC lead cabinet member report considered by this Council in January 2019 did not identify serious detrimental impacts on residential areas. It identified a range of measures which were fully documented in that report.

5. The developments cited were measured against the original Treasury Green Book analysis, which itself was produced to support the initial bid to the Department for Transport's Local Sustainable Transport Fund. Whilst other impacts associated with the Cheltenham Transport Fund were noted, these were clearly not measured against the original base case.