

Cabinet

5 November 2019

Public Questions (4)

1.	Question from Chris Nelson to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	Your report states that "a 20% increase in traffic has been taken as the threshold for an acceptable level of traffic growth." This 20% figure seems a rather arbitrary figure that has just been 'plucked out of the air'. Can you please explain why 19.9% is regarded as acceptable and 20.1% is no longer acceptable?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The cabinet report at section 3.1 refers directly to the CTP phase 4 update report produced by GCC as the highways authority and notes key highlights of that report on the experimental traffic order at Boots Corner. The full report is also provided at appendix 2.</p> <p>Consequently I refer to section 3.2 of that appendix which explains the methodology for assessing growth with reference to UK government traffic growth forecasts for Cheltenham and experience of a previous closure at Boots Corner in 2009.</p> <p>Given the full explanation provided by the highways authority in the papers, I do not accept that the figure was 'plucked from the air'. As the assessment provides a clear rationale for this threshold I am happy to accept the basis for the analysis and recognise that having a threshold helps us to identify those locations where further investigation and work may be required.</p>
2.	Question from Chris Nelson to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	Your report although comprehensive and full of detail is not always easy to understand. Please explain which road, post the Boots Corner changes, has experienced the biggest percentage increase in traffic since the 2015 baseline? What measures are proposed to mitigate this increase so that it is less than the 20% level deemed to be acceptable? If the mitigation measures do not reduce the traffic growth to less than 20%, what level will be achieved?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Again I refer to the GCC report at appendix 2, specifically table 1 which utilises seven-day 24 hour two-way flows as the primary indicator for assessing and comparing the traffic flow at each site, as the scheme is in place 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This shows a growth of 73% at Winchcombe Street South from November 2015 to March 2019 and is explicitly referred to in the text under 3.3.4. We understand that GCC has explored options for traffic calming on Rodney Road which is the feeder route for this traffic counter, with the aim of mitigating this increase. Our understanding is that the GCC preference is to undertake works once a decision is known on CTP phase 4 as this creates scope for engagement with local residents and businesses before deciding upon 'permanent' rather than temporary changes to best reflect the high profile of the High Street here.</p>

	As the report highlights traffic levels are generally falling reflecting modal shift and changing work patterns, so what level will be achieved as behaviours change is difficult to forecast and will depend on the type of interventions supported.
3.	Question from Alan McDougall to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>While the cut off 20% increase in traffic flow stated in reports is seen as “<i>credible and acceptable</i>” to both Councils, a figure agreed by a closed body of experts, it is however unacceptable to residents affected by the dispersement traffic fallout from the Boots Corner trial closure. The justification for the Boots Corner trial closure is based on a required significant reduction of traffic flows, but more importantly on reduced NO2 levels it suggests that any increase on residential roads traffic is therefore equally unjustified, dangerous and unacceptable.</p> <p>A nonetheless significant increase in traffic volumes in Clarence Square (15%) where traffic flow monitors in both Clarence Square and Monson Avenue have been put in place, however, there are no NO2 monitors and evidence has not been provided.</p> <p>The official 2019.11.05 CAB Cheltenham Transport Plan appendix 3 air quality report concludes that “<i>from the data considered (above) is that the CTP Ph.4 has made very little difference, either positive or negative to air pollution levels across the town. This is probably not surprising, as the scheme was not explicitly designed as a project to improve air quality</i>”.</p> <p>As the Councils cannot argue for clean air in one town centre area at the expense of another residential area, can the Council(s) evidence that there has been a reduction to previously monitored NO2 levels in support of public safety in <u>all</u> affected areas?</p>
	Response from
	<p>The CTP air quality data is collected by the CBC environmental health team and the air quality report is set out at appendix 3 in full.</p> <p>Cheltenham has an extremely comprehensive air quality collection regime that complies with the council’s legal duties. This does not extend to air quality monitoring in every street in the town. The team have extensive understanding of monitoring and monitors sites where they anticipate problems to occur based upon a range of factors including traffic flows, width of streets, and ability for pollution to disperse.</p> <p>The report does not show clean air in one area at the expense of another area, but rather a gradual reduction in NO levels over time which mirrors the general reduction in traffic, less polluting vehicles, modal shift and changing work patterns. The area wide benefits of this should not be underestimated however we will continue to focus upon the persistent long term challenges at Poole Way which existed long before the trial. The planned traffic signal works by GCC along the A4019 in the next financial year should help alleviate this challenge.</p>
4.	Question from Alan McDougall to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	It is quite understandable that John Lewis will show their position on the High Street as a success otherwise they would not be in business and is based on their

	<p>business model irrespective of the trial closure. It is also true that The Brewery Quarter will have a significant uplift in footfall due to the adjacency of the NCP car park, benefit from debt fuelled investment from the Restaurant Group, Mitchell and Butler etc., but more importantly from the coincidental major new access created through to the High Street.</p> <p>Given the fact that in general High Street retail sales are down significantly and casual dining is not sustainable at present levels can CBC provide a detailed response regarding:</p> <p>a) What was the projected sales target, not just footfall numbers, given by John Lewis Partnership to the Council pre-agreement, pre-opening and pre-June 2018 compared to figures quoted around October 2019?</p> <p>b) In terms of risk assessment and due diligence, does the Council consider the fiscal debt of all the parent companies currently based in The Brewery to be acceptable?</p> <p>c) As the Council supports east-west/west-east footfall in the High Street as a benefit over the demise of the more unique retail differences in The Promenade and other surrounding streets, can they please publish like-for-like figures specific to those areas before and since the BC trial closure in order to show that benefit footfall and sales have not just migrated to the High Street?</p>
	<p>Response from</p>
	<p>a) The data requested is not available to this Council and will have to be requested directly from John Lewis and partners, although I suspect it will be commercially sensitive and unavailable.</p> <p>b) This council does not undertake due diligence assessments of organisations operating in the Brewery or wider town other than for properties owned by the Council, where covenant strength is a material factor in any lease determination.</p> <p>c) Again sales are not a matter of public record so I am unable to advise. Footfall data for side streets does not exist so I am unable to provide further assistance,</p> <p>However there was no intention of favouring one part of the town centre over another. The success of any town centre depends upon the vibrancy and mix of the offer and Cheltenham, whilst suffering from certain 'brand' losses like every town centre continues to attract new names – Oliver Bonas, Urban Outfitters, the Alchemist – and equally continues to benefit from investment as demonstrated at the Quadrangle and 111-117 High Street.</p>