

**Cheltenham Borough Council**  
**Council – 7 October 2013**  
**Cheltenham Transport Plan – Petition**

<b>Accountable member</b>	<b>Councillor Andrew McKinlay – Cabinet Member Built Environment</b>
<b>Accountable officer</b>	<b>Mike Redman – Director Built Environment</b>
<b>Ward(s) affected</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Significant Decision</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<p>This report:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ has been prepared in response to the receipt of a petition which has triggered a Council debate because it includes more than 750 signatories;</li> <li>▪ summarises the context leading to the receipt of the petition in respect of the emerging Cheltenham Transport Plan;</li> <li>▪ provides background information on the lengthy journey, in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), which has led us to this point in the process;</li> <li>▪ makes recommendations as to how the petition should be dealt with and the calling of an Extraordinary Council Meeting</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p><b>That Council, having considered the petition in accordance with the procedure set out in Appendix 2, resolves as follows:-</b></p> <p><b>i) to note the concerns of certain sections of the public;</b></p> <p><b>ii) to refer the petition to an Extraordinary Council Meeting following receipt of the formal GCC consultation analysis referred to in the report, in order to consider both the concerns raised in the petition and the implications of the Transport Plan for the future of the whole town.</b></p>

<b>Financial implications</b>	<p>None arising specifically from this report.</p> <p><b>Contact officer: Mark Sheldon, Director of Resources, mark.sheldon@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 264123</b></p>
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<b>Legal implications</b>	The petition falls to be considered under the Authority's Petition Scheme.  If Council exercises its power to request an Extraordinary Council Meeting then the Proper Officer must make arrangements to call that meeting.  <b>Contact officer: Peter Lewis (OneLegal), peter.lewis@tewkesbury.gov.uk, 01684 272012</b>
<b>HR implications (including learning and organisational development)</b>	There are no direct HR implications arising from the content of this report.  <b>Contact officer: Julie McCarthy, GO Shared Service Human Resources Manager (West), julie.mccarthy@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 264355</b>
<b>Key risks</b>	See risk assessment attached as Appendix 2 to this report.
<b>Corporate and community plan Implications</b>	None arising specifically from this report.
<b>Environmental and climate change implications</b>	None arising specifically from this report.
<b>Property/Asset Implications</b>	None arising specifically from this report.  <b>Contact officer: David Roberts, Head of Property &amp; Asset Management, david.roberts@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 264151</b>

## 1. Content of petition received

- 1.1 The Council has received a petition under the heading 'NO to Cheltenham Transport Plan and Boots Corner partial closure'.
- 1.2 The petition (a copy of which has been made available in the Members' room) includes 217 e-mail names and 910 signatures. As such, it contains more than the 750 signatories required to trigger a Cheltenham Council debate, but is below the threshold of 5,000 signatories required for a debate by Gloucestershire County Council.
- 1.3 There is some duplication between names appearing on both signature and e-mail lists, as verified by postal address and postcodes.
- 1.4 The e-mail list pre-dates the formal consultation process by nearly 3 months, with names appearing from April 2013.
- 1.5 The statement within the petition states:-

*'We the undersigned DO NOT SUPPORT the Cheltenham Transport Plan. We urge both Gloucestershire County Council and Cheltenham Borough Council not to proceed with the proposals as laid out in the consultation running between July 1<sup>st</sup> and September 1<sup>st</sup> 2013.*

*We are particularly concerned with the proposed partial closure of Boots Corner. Reducing the number of vehicles will only offer a small improvement in the public realm quality at Boots Corner but the associated increase in displaced traffic which will have a severe impact on residential roads, for example College Road, St Luke's Road, old bath road, St George's Street, Hewlett Road, All Saints Road and Gloucester Road.*

*We urge the County Council not to implement the partial closure of Boots Corner as part of the Cheltenham Transport plan. **WE condemn this proposal (and) ask that each signature in this petition is counted as a NO vote in the consultation.***

## **2. Background to receipt of the petition**

- 2.1** In 2000, initial proposals were debated as an outcome of the publication of the Latham report. These proposals were subsequently picked up by the Civic Pride project (supported by the now defunct South West Regional Development Agency) and following comprehensive consultation events in 2007 and 2008, improvement plans were adopted and supported by both CBC and GCC. However, implementation did not immediately follow due to insufficient funding, the need to work up detailed transport plans and the inevitable challenges posed by the recession.
- 2.2** More recently, the creation of the Cheltenham Development Task Force (CDTF) has given new impetus to a range of projects aimed at securing the long term economic performance of the town. GCC, working in conjunction with the Task Force, was successful in securing funding from the Department for Transport's Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) in May 2012, allowing the Transport Plan element of the project to be progressed.
- 2.3** The initial project had its roots in an initiative designed to promote economic prosperity in towns across the south west of England, sponsored by SWRDA. This took different forms in response to the perceived challenges and for example, Cheltenham had a project badged as 'Civic Pride', whilst Gloucester had a more fundamental approach, delivered by an Urban Regeneration Company.
- 2.4** The Civic Pride project, as was, has been a work in progress since 2001. Over the years, its ideas have received a significant level of public support. The work led by the Cheltenham Development Task Force is bringing that project to fruition, with GCC leading on its transport elements and Cheltenham Borough Council on its public realm and development elements.
- 2.5** The project has been developed in 4 stages across a decade or more – the sporadic timing being dependent on the availability of the resources to deliver each element. Each stage has been subject to public involvement and this has often included focussed workshops. The 4 stages are listed below. Public consultation involving specific questions with a reported analysis has taken place at stages b, c, & d. At each stage, decisions to progress have been based on a careful assessment of the public response and consideration of the benefits or otherwise of the project to the town. The 4 stages can be described broadly as:
- Ideas (2001)
  - Concepts (2007)
  - Planning (2008)
  - Implementation (2013)
- (a) Ideas**  
There has been public support for the core principle of public realm enhancement since at least 2001, when architect Derek Latham presented some radical ideas for the redesign of Boots Corner and other key public spaces at a series of public meetings.
- (b) Concepts**  
Following receipt of SWRDA funding, formal working groups were established at officer and member level, including representation at Borough and County level on each. The project was developed further and a number of well attended focussed workshops and wider consultation events were held to gather opinions and discuss options. This stage culminated in a public consultation in June 2007 which sought views on some key concepts demonstrating how the projects initial ideas could be delivered – these

included suggestions for changes to the traffic network, broadly similar to those now being proposed. The response to this consultation saw 73% support for the principles of Civic Pride and 52% support for a range of ideas to alter the traffic system.

**(c) Planning**

Following this, proposals for town centre regeneration, traffic management and public realm improvements were formally adopted by the Borough Council in the Civic Pride Urban Design Framework in 2008 as a Supplementary Planning Document, which has statutory weight in the planning process. Consultation as part of the statutory adoption showed levels of respondent support at about 35% and objection at 24%, the remainder making general comments on the proposals.

**(d) Implementation**

The current stage – is the main focus of this report. It details proposals for a reconfiguration of traffic management measures contained in the Urban Design Framework form the basis of the traffic proposals presented in the Cheltenham Transport Challenge.

- 2.6** Responses throughout have supported the need to improve key public spaces and streets which are currently considered poor in terms of the place-making agenda. Other frustrations regularly aired include the complexity of the one-way system. Support has come from the business community as well as other respondents.
- 2.7** Nevertheless, despite the main consultation exercises preceding this stage showing more support for the project than objection, there has been a consistent level of public concern regarding displacement of traffic onto streets around the town centre, and this has been a significant feature in the latest exercise, which is the subject of this report.
- 2.8** Whilst both CBC and GCC were keen to progress the public ambition it was critical that further funds were secured for any delivery to be a success. Evidence from many towns and cities that have perceived road network challenges have tackled them through a range of measures. Examples examined include:-
- Ashford in Kent which broke the stranglehold of its ring road by restoring single lane two-way working removed all but one set of traffic lights and married this with radical landscape-led redesign of the resulting streets to significantly increase the road space shared with pedestrians. That work resulted in average speed reductions down to just 20 mph in the shared space areas, with no loss of vehicle movements and a reported decrease in accidents, with none involving personal injury in the first six months following implementation.
  - Portishead which removed traffic lights from a key town centre junction as a four-week experiment which was made permanent owing to the improved throughput of vehicles and easier movement of pedestrians.
  - Coventry, which is completing a project to remove all city centre traffic lights and where part of a dual carriage-way approach to the centre has been turfed-over to enhance public green space, contributing to an impressive environmental uplift; and
  - Worcester which achieved a notable shift in travel patterns by encouraging more people to consider using alternative and sustainable modes of transport.
- 2.9** In the course of this work, officers from both Councils visited a number of the schemes and met the engineers and designers involved. Additionally, research evidence (University of Leeds) supported the idea that it is pedestrians (footfall) that adds vitality and performance to a retail centre, not car drivers passing by or sitting in traffic queues. Thus, it was considered vital that funds were found to support a wide range of measures, not just physical.

- 2.10** The securing of government grant funding by GCC from the LSTF was a critical precursor which meant that the scheme could move to the next stage. However, it should be noted that in the interim period from 2008 until funding was secured, further traffic modelling had been undertaken by GCC as highway authority. A key component of this was the development of a 'Paramics' traffic model, a technically superior software modelling tool to that previously deployed and which provided greater options for modelling impact assessments.
- 2.11** The earlier 2006/2007 traffic modelling assessment carried out by Colin Buchanan on behalf of the Civic Pride UDF project group, was tasked with identifying a preferred scheme proposal, but was based on outputs from the CSV 2003 base year model only. A subsequent comparison of 2003 and 2011 peak hour modelled flows (work undertaken by Gloucestershire Highways/Atkins - GCC's term consultants) showed significant predicted increases in traffic on roads in central Cheltenham over the forecast period. It was therefore decided that the traffic impacts associated with the preferred scheme proposal be re-assessed to take account of this increased background traffic predicted in the period up to 2011 and 2016, based on traffic forecasts taken from GCC's 2011 and 2016 CSV future year models.
- 2.12** That 'revised' CSV modelling exercise, undertaken by Gloucestershire Highways/Atkins, was completed and reported on in October 2008, with the results indicating that the scale of the potential traffic impact on the adjacent junctions under assessment would be relatively small compared to existing delays experienced in the 'do nothing' base case.
- 2.13** However, given that SATURN (Simulation and Assignment of Traffic to Urban Road Networks) is primarily a strategic 'area-wide' traffic modelling tool, it was recommended that further more detailed junction assessments based on emerging micro-simulation modelling techniques would be necessary before confirming these preliminary CSV model findings. A key component of this was the development of a Paramics traffic model.
- 2.14** PARAMICS was chosen for this latest traffic assessment exercise as the most appropriate traffic modelling package as it combines the detailed traffic behaviour relationships inherent to micro-simulation software packages together with a strong route assignment procedure – making it suitable for assessing the proposed changes in road configuration in Cheltenham, and key to accurately assessing the effect of any alterations considered, particularly in relation to the anticipated re-routing of traffic following the closure of Boot's corner to general through traffic.
- 2.15** Consequently, during 2009/2010 'base year' PARAMICS micro-simulation peak hour models of Cheltenham town centre and the surrounding inner area were developed, and these fully validated models - Local Model Validation Report dated December 2010 - have since been used as the basis for assessing the detailed design of the proposed scheme option for a series of 2016 and 2026 future forecast year scenarios. These models build on GCC's existing wider area CSV SATURN strategic models, as used for traffic modelling purposes in the earlier 'Civic Pride' project work.
- 2.16** While PARAMICS is recognised by the Department for Transport (DfT) as a reliable tool for this purpose, and is accepted as an industry-standard traffic modelling computer package for detailed assessment of traffic management options, no 'simulation' programmes can ever be considered as 100% accurate in predicting traffic behaviour. However, it has proven to be reliable for other projects of a similar nature, and in the case of the Cheltenham model has been fully validated against a comprehensive set of 2010 'base year' observed junction traffic counts commissioned by GCC.
- 2.17** The latest detailed PARAMICS traffic modelling exercise undertaken by Gloucestershire Highways/Atkins on behalf of and reviewed by the Cheltenham Task Force, indicates that without restraint, we should expect a significant increase in future peak hour traffic volumes (and traffic congestion), and higher pollution levels in Cheltenham in the years to come. Given

that vehicle pollution levels already need to be lowered and the identified problem of increased congestion needing to be addressed, the inevitable conclusion is that to 'do nothing' is not sustainable.

- 2.18** In preparation for the summer 2013 public consultation exercise, a series of Paramics model runs were carried out. These comprised the 2010 model base year scenario, the predicted traffic volumes in 2026 with the current town centre road layout, and the predicted traffic volumes in 2026 with the proposed road layout in place. The year 2026 was chosen as this represents a suitable horizon year – 10 years after completion of the proposed changes, and to demonstrate that the packages of measures will still be effective well into the future.
- 2.19** Comparison of these flows were then presented at the Consultation events as a set of diagrams, for the weekday morning (08:00 to 9:00hrs) and evening (17:00 to 18:00hrs) peak hour periods, to show the effects of the scheme proposal, and in particular the re-routing of traffic onto alternative routes further out from the town centre.
- 2.20** The Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) package of measures is much wider than merely traffic modelling and adjusting the road network. The LSTF programme includes both capital and revenue funding of which the majority of funding allocated by the Department for Transport is for revenue expenditure. The revenue funding is being used to engage with businesses, organisations and residents to reduce the impact of road traffic on the highway network. This strategy to encourage more walking, cycling and use of public transport is an important element of the whole project in Cheltenham as it will reduce the impact of traffic changes resulting from the proposals in the Cheltenham Transport Plan.
- 2.21** Over the last six months, the LSTF programme has been engaging with up to 7,000 households in the residential areas of south and west Cheltenham. Travel advisers have been providing information on a range of transport options and providing materials and incentives to trial other modes of transport. Provision of cycle maps, pedometers to encourage more walking and a newly produced multi-operator bus map have proved popular. A trial of a smartcard that is accepted on two of the main bus operators' services has enabled local people to try local buses for a month free of charge.

### **3. The Cheltenham traffic plan consultation process**

- 3.1** The public consultation concerning these proposals is being managed on behalf of GCC by Gloucestershire Highways with full support from both CBC and the CDTF.
- 3.2** The consultation event ran from 1st July 2013 to 1st September 2013 inclusive - a period of 63 days, or 9 weeks. A standard consultation period is more often a 6 week period, but it was decided to extend the period by 50% to allow for the impact of summer holidays.
- 3.3** Prior to the consultation taking place information concerning the proposals had been issued to the local media over an extended period of time. Initially this promotion of LSTF issues was led by the Task Force, to allow time for GCC to recruit a delivery team. On the 8th September 2012, there was a launch coinciding with a 'Sustainable Transport Expo' in Cheltenham which was attended by The Rt Hon. Dr Vince Cable MP, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, which secured significant media coverage. Further promotional activities took place including information events to various groups and a visit by Norman Baker MP, parliamentary under-secretary of state for the Department for Transport on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013. After this period, GCC took on the lead role for the consultation process.

**3.4** The awareness raising process took various forms in the fortnight prior to the consultation starting and during the consultation period itself. As well as the usual media coverage (principally Echo and local radio – BBC, Heart FM) a range of other activities took place:

- 16,000 information leaflets and questionnaires were delivered to households within the central area
- A dedicated website was hosted by both GCC and CBC websites hot-linked to the GCC consultation platform
- A briefing session was held for both CBC and GCC councillors
- An exhibition roadshow visited 13 sites across the town
- Briefing sessions also took place upon request, including to the C5 group of five Parishes Councils, Civic Society and local MP
- Specific meetings were held with other stakeholders upon request e.g. local private school operators
- Press releases were timed to keep the event in the public domain and every opportunity was taken to promote the consultation website.

**3.5** Public exhibitions were initially organised and advised within the consultation leaflet as follows:

Sainsbury's at Oakley, Priors Rd	Tuesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> July	11am – 3pm
St Lukes Church Hall, St Lukes Pl	Wednesday 3 <sup>rd</sup> July	5pm – 8pm
St Pauls Church Hall, Brunswick St	Thursday 4 <sup>th</sup> July	3pm – 7pm
The Municipal Offices, The Promenade	Friday 5 <sup>th</sup> July	3pm – 7pm
The Brewery, Henrietta St	Saturday 6 <sup>th</sup> July	11am – 4pm
Up Hatherley Library, Hulbert Cres	Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> July	2pm – 5.30pm
Christ Church Hall, Malvern Rd	Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> July	3pm – 7pm
Hesters Way Resource Centre	Wednesday 10 <sup>th</sup> July	3pm – 7pm
Regent Arcade, High St	Thursday 11 <sup>th</sup> July	11am – 4pm
Charlton Kings Library, Church St	Friday 12 <sup>th</sup> July	3pm – 7pm

In order to maintain public interest in the consultation and in an attempt to generate as many questionnaire responses as possible three further exhibitions were organised:

The Promenade, Outside Waterstones	Wednesday 14 <sup>th</sup> Aug	11am – 3pm
Regent Arcade, High St	Saturday 17 <sup>th</sup> Aug	11am – 3pm
Cheltenham Cricket Club, Fairview	Wednesday 21 <sup>st</sup> Aug	4pm – 7pm

**3.6** It was highlighted at each exhibition event that any feedback given on the day was not a formal response; it was merely an opportunity to gain information on the scheme and ask questions. If they wanted to provide a formal response to the consultation, they would have to do so in the form of letters, emails or completion of a questionnaire.

**3.7** Additionally there was a wide range of views published in the letters page of the Echo which assisted with general awareness raising.

**3.8** A factor noted by all individuals involved in the consultation was the opportunity that the event engendered for the public to air their views on the existing road network situation. There were many conversations concerning existing perceptions of pinch points and challenges, including too much traffic on specific streets; the challenges of local parking for residents; the complexities of the one-way system; the challenge of cruisers and speeding generally; should cyclists and pedestrians share the same space? This wide ranging set of issues and concerns reinforces the earlier (2006 & 2008) consultation outcome and position adopted by GCC that to “do-nothing” in relation to predicted future traffic growth is not a realistic option.

#### **4. Current situation**

**4.1** GCC has taken advice throughout the process from the Consultation Institute, a not-for-profit organisation which seeks to promote the highest standards of public and stakeholder consultation. The Institute reviewed GCC’s plans for the public consultation, making specific suggestions and recommendations to ensure a robust process, including the careful consideration of equality impacts to ensure that particular interest groups were not disadvantaged by the process followed.

**4.2** To assist with coding of written comments and the analysis of the results, GCC has employed Opinion Research Services Ltd (ORS), an independent social research organisation. ORS is a Market Research Society Company Partner and is fully compliant with the MRS Code of Conduct. ORS is also a member of the Consultation Institute and its research activities and systems are fully accredited to BS ISO 9001:2008 and BS ISO 20252.

#### **5. Conclusion**

**5.1** In order to fully analyse and give due weight and full consideration of the consultation analysis, it is understood that the GCC report will not be available for several weeks. Only upon receipt of that report will CBC be in a position to make a fully informed decision on whether or not to support the Cheltenham Transport Plan.

**5.2** Subject to Council endorsement, officers consider that the issue is worthy of a separate single item Special Council debate, so that the points raised in the petition can be fully aired in the context of the wider consultation responses.

<b>Report author</b>	<b>Contact officer: Mike Redman, Director Built Environment, mike.redman@cheltenham.gov.uk,  01242 26416</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>1. Risk Assessment  2. Process for dealing with a petition at council</b>
<b>Background information</b>	<b>1. Council’s petition scheme – report to Council 13 May 2010</b>



The risk				Original risk score (impact x likelihood)			Managing risk				
Risk ref.	Risk description	Risk Owner	Date raised	Impact 1-5	Likelihood 1-6	Score	Control	Action	Deadline	Responsible officer	Transferred to risk register
	If the Council considers the petition in the absence of the wider consultation results, any resultant decision would not be fully informed with the views of the wider public and is likely to be unsound	Mike Redman	19/09/13	4	4	16	Reduce	Council report recommendations			
	If the Council does not take the concerns raised in the petition into consideration, it has the potential to undermine confidence in the local democratic process	Mike Redman	19/09/13	3	4	12	Reduce	Council report recommendations			

**Explanatory notes**

**Impact** – an assessment of the impact if the risk occurs on a scale of 1-5 (1 being least impact and 5 being major or critical)

**Likelihood** – how likely is it that the risk will occur on a scale of 1-6

(1 being almost impossible, 2 is very low, 3 is low, 4 significant, 5 high and 6 a very high probability)

**Control** - Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close