

**Decision Session – Executive Member for
Transport**

22 June 2020

Report of the Corporate Director of Economy and Place

The Groves Area Experimental Traffic Regulation Order

Summary

1. This report provides an amended proposal to close the Groves residential area to through traffic following the decision of Executive Member for Transport on Oct 24 2019 to approve this subject to detailed design and further consultation. A revised proposal taking account of that consultation is put forward for the Executive Member for Transport to consider progressing as an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order.

Recommendations

2. The Executive Member for Transport is asked to:
 - 1) Note the outcome of the consultation carried out in February 2020 and the proposed method for further consultation as the project is implemented

Reason: To comply with City of York Council public engagement expectations and to comply with the legal requirements of taking forward Traffic Regulation Orders.

- 2) Agree to proceed with Option 3 – items a to m - the implementation of an 18 month Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (Exp. TRO)

Reason: Because an Exp. TRO provides the greatest flexibility in cases where it is anticipated there may need to be adjustments made at short notice and in a timely fashion to improve the scheme.

- 3) That the start date be within the next two to three weeks, taking account of practical arrangements such as ordering signs and notifying residents and businesses of the start date.

Reason: In order to secure funding through the Emergency Active Travel Fund that requires expenditure within 8 weeks to facilitate reallocation of road space to walking and cycling and facilitates social distancing.

Background

3. The Groves area (see Annex A) is a residential area bounded on 3 sides by the main road network (A1036 inner ring road, A1036 Monkgate, B1363 Clarence Street and C94 Haxby Road) and it is important to note that none of the roads within this area are classified roads (A, B or C roads). The narrow residential streets through the area have experienced a large increase in through traffic in recent years. This ongoing increase can be evidenced from the introduction over the years of a number of measures aimed at controlling traffic; one way system, existing road closures, access restrictions (that are ineffective) and traffic calming features.
4. Although use of the remaining through routes in the residential area does alleviate some capacity on the main road network there is a question mark as to whether this is appropriate given the residential nature of the area and the substantial traffic queues through it during peak periods.
5. The consultation and residents' engagement of the Groves Regeneration Project over the last two years identified that there was a strong desire expressed by residents for a removal of the high levels of through traffic from their area as the most effective way to improve road safety and air quality and create the conditions for a healthier and more active community in the area. Hence, an outline proposal was drawn up to achieve this aim.
6. A report was brought to the October 2019 Executive Member for Transport Decision Session to outline the concept of carrying out an experimental scheme to remove through traffic based on the proposals. This was approved for taking forward subject to the timing of other works in the area and some further consultation being carried out with residents.

7. An experimental scheme was considered the best approach due to the impact the measures would also have on local residents travel patterns and this would enable informed views to be expressed during the experiment.
8. Because the proposal is an experiment the measures used will be of a temporary nature. As the experiment progresses highway officers will work with the Groves Regeneration Team and local residents groups to improve appearance of the closures (see annex G - Planters at road closure points). If in due course the experiment is made permanent additional design work and funding will be required to make the measures on street acceptable for the long term.

Covid 19

9. Progress on this project has been maintained during the pandemic because the aims of the Exp. TRO also contribute to the aims of the Government guidance to achieve greater social distancing by reallocating road space for walking and cycling to encourage active travel. Whilst the boundaries of the carriageway are not being re-drawn at present the volume of traffic will be significantly reduced enabling residents to choose to use the carriageway safely when needed.
10. Walking and cycling has increased as a percentage of highway activity during lockdown with benefits for air quality and quality of life. This measure has been brought forward as part of the council's Covid Economic Recovery Transport and Place Strategy to enable social distancing as businesses reopen and encourage continuing shift away from driving for local trips in the area.

Consultation

11. The usual consultation for Exp. TRO's is to implement the experimental measures and get feedback from road users before deciding on the future of the scheme. In this case because of other highway works in the area some preliminary consultation was carried out by circulating the draft proposal to residents for their views. Residents were invited to attend a drop in session at Park Grove School in February to ask questions and leave feedback. Some additional pre-experiment consultation was considered for residents of the St. John Street area and with local businesses due to some particular concerns raised. Due to the current pandemic and the opportunity to utilise Government funding and lower vehicle traffic we have reviewed delivery of the scheme. In order to

capture the current funding and traffic levels it is suggested that the Executive Member considers proceeding and getting feedback within the experimental period and where practical making changes to the experiment if that is considered appropriate. Working with the Groves Association, conversations have now taken place with at least some of the traders. A letter drop to all residents in the St Johns Street / Penley's Grove Street area has also taken place outlining further changes officers have brought forward to meet residents' concerns and outlining how further representations can be made.

12. The original consultation drop in session was well attended and a precis of the comments and suggestions made is in Annex B. Further comments sent in by e-mail and from the Door 84 organisation are shown in Annexes C and D.
13. The comments made during the drop in session fall into 4 broad categories:
 - In favour,
 - Suggestions (the St John St area comments are grouped here),
 - Statements, concerns and questions,
 - Outside the scope of the project.
14. Whilst it is fully acknowledged that a significant change such as is being considered will be a cause for concern for some and be an inconvenience for others there is no impediment to proceeding with an experimental order to establish the impact of the scheme and whether it provides the most effective means to deliver the hoped-for improvements to this residential area.

Proposed and potential further changes following initial consultation

15. In the light of responses made it is proposed that the following alterations to the initial draft proposal be taken forward.
 - Closing St. John Crescent (exact location subject to discussion with frontages and those directly affected)
 - Keeping St. John Street 2 way
 - Making part of Penley Grove Street 2 way
 - Relocating the Earle Street closure point
 - Allowing cyclists to travel both ways in some of the one way streets

Other suggestions will be reviewed during the experiment, such as:

- Removing the parking meters where resident parking is reduced. This would need to be considered on a case by case basis and will be reviewed independently of the proposed experimental measures.
- Removing the Neville Street / Terrace road closure. This suggestion has potential and will be reviewed during the experiment and introduced as a separate proposal if considered desirable.
- Removing the Markham Street No entry restriction. This suggestion has potential and will be reviewed during the experiment and introduced as a separate proposal if considered desirable.

Design considerations

16. Experimental schemes are by their very nature temporary and subject to change therefore the measures used are fairly rudimentary at the outset in case there's a need to make amendments to the position or remove the measures altogether. These basic features remain in place for the duration of the experiment, then if the scheme is made permanent more permanent design features can be implemented. There is however a strong desire in this case for the closure positions to be planted up to meet local community expectations (see the regeneration statement provided in Annex G for background). During the experimental period the Council will work with Ward Members and the community to design a more pleasing appearance of the closure point whilst still allowing for the experimental basis of the scheme.

Road safety impact on the wider area

17. Some concerns were expressed regarding the possible safety impact on the surrounding road network, such as along Haxby Road and in the Gillygate area. Whilst it can be assumed there might be additional vehicles on these adjacent routes it does not follow that there will be an increase in road safety issues as these are main roads that already have adequate crossing facilities at key points where pedestrians cross the road. Further conversations will take place with residents of Claremont Terrace and Portland Street who have expressed some concerns.

Traffic Regulation Order Consultation

18. The Experimental Traffic Regulation Order process is a strict national legal process that must be followed for the experiment to be conducted correctly.
 - The maximum period for an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order is 18 months.
 - Changes to, or a suspension of, the experiment can be made very rapidly in order to resolve difficulties if considered appropriate, however
 - An experiment can only be made permanent following a six month period where there have been no changes made to the experiment and any objections made during the period have been considered.
19. The Exp. TRO process therefore differs from the permanent TRO process where objections are considered before works are carried out on street. The Exp. TRO process has advantages for road users and those most affected by the scheme to experience the proposed changes and make their comments based on the actual situation rather than anticipated benefits or problems in advance of a decision, hence a more accurate level of representations can be made.
20. Views of other road users who do not live in the area will be gathered through a dedicated email address as publicised on the council website and in press statements and will be considered in any decision whether remove or to make the Traffic Regulation Order permanent.

Options

21. Option 1 – Introduce an access only restriction covering the whole area. This has been suggested by some local residents. While it is possible to introduce this type of restriction they are almost universally ignored by drivers either due to ignorance of the signs meaning or deliberately because ongoing enforcement by the police is impractical (or in this case due to the size of the area, almost impossible). For these reasons access restrictions are no longer put forward as a solution to a problem. Hence this is not a recommended option.
22. Option 2 – Rising bollards. These are outside the scope of the project so far but are included in order to cover the main options available. These measures would need a substantial amount of additional work to provide

a reliable feasibility study for introducing a permanent TRO (because of the costs) instead of an Exp. TRO.

Introduce a series of rising bollards at key locations to retain full access for local residents and businesses. The initial cost would likely exceed £250k, there would be a substantial ongoing cost for maintenance of the equipment, then the replacement cost when the equipment reaches the end of its life. There would also be ongoing staff costs to administer a system of access tags for residents and businesses. These systems can work well where the number of vehicles requiring access is low – perhaps 2 or 3 per hour - but this is not the case in the Groves. This is not a recommended option due to the initial cost for which there is no budget available, the ongoing revenue costs and the long term reliability of the equipment.

23. Option 3 – Introduce a series of measures under an Exp. TRO as outlined below (and indicated on the plan in Annex E and E1) in accordance with the consultant’s draft proposal and revisions following the initial public consultation. This would be the starting position of the experiment and additional measures could be introduced in the early stages of the experiment if considered appropriate to overcome difficulties or achieve additional improvements. The changes following the initial consultation with residents are highlighted in bold.
 - a. Close Lowther Street at its junction with Brownlow Street.
 - b. Close Penley Grove Street between St. John Crescent and March Street (**revised position in response to consultation**). This will include the loss of around 4 parking bays in order to achieve a turning head – the exact number still to be determined in the detailed design.
 - c. Close Earle Street close to its junction with Amber Street. This is a **revised location** put forward by residents during the initial consultation.
 - d. Close Neville Terrace close to its junction with Brownlow Street.
 - e. Make Penley Grove Street two way between March Street and the new closure point in b. above.
 - f. Make Penley Grove Street two way between Monkgate and the new closure point in b. This is a **revision requested** during the initial consultation. This will include the loss of around 2 extra parking bays for the turning movements and one parking bay to create a suitable passing place for the low number of vehicles (providing point g. is also approved) that would be using the street.

- g. Close St. John Crescent between Penley Grove Street and Garden Street. This is reliant on point f. above being approved and retains 2 way traffic on St. John Street. This is a **revision requested** during the initial consultation.
- h. Make March Street one way except for cyclists. This is a **revision requested** during the initial consultation.
- i. Make Brownlow Street one way except for cyclists. This is a **revision requested** during the initial consultation.
- j. Merge the boundaries of residents parking zones R7, R10 and R25 so that the new closure positions do not disadvantage local residents ability to park (Annex F).
- k. Suspend the old access only restriction on the St. John Street area that would be redundant (not shown on the plan in Annex E).
- l. Delegate authority to the Director of Economy and Place to make additions or amendments to the Exp. TRO after discussions with the Executive Member for Transport and Ward Members.
- m. Introduce a no right turn prohibition when exiting Penley Grove Street on to Monkgate (i.e. require drivers to use roundabout for such movements) necessary in light of amendments made **as a result of consultation** (not shown on the plan in Annex E).

This is a recommended option because it meets the aims of the project, has taken in to account suggestions made during the initial consultation, provides significant flexibility and allows for a rapid adaptation of the experiment.

24. Option 4 - Take no further action. This is not a recommended option.

Analysis

25. The request for measures to remove through traffic came from a regeneration project in the area that identified vehicle pollution, disruption and danger of through traffic as a significant factor undermining quality of life in the area. The success or failure of the experiment will therefore not be limited to statistical analysis of traffic flows but include perceptions of those who live in the area and other aspects of community cohesion. From a traffic management perspective we will give a view on the impact on the surrounding road network and also the impact on encouraging modal shift for short local journeys. These views and perceptions will need to be considered before Members decide on whether or not the measures eventually become permanent.

Council Plan

26. This proposal contributes to the Council Plan 2019-2023 - Building Communities, Promoting sustainable travel choices and reducing traffic travelling through the city centre.

Implications

27.

- **Financial:** This scheme is identified in the 2020/21 Local Transport Budget £20k and will benefit from the Emergency Active Travel fund £10K for implementation of the experiment. Cost implications of a permanent scheme will need to consider additional funding allocation and be considered as part of any decision to implement a permanent Traffic Regulation Order.
- **Human Resources (HR)** There are no HR implications
- **Equalities** There are no equalities implications because there are no impacts on residents or road users other than longer routes for motor vehicles.
- **Legal** There are no Legal implications
- **Crime and Disorder** There are no Crime and Disorder implications
- **Information Technology (IT)** There are no IT implications
- **Property** There are no Property implications
- **Other** There are no Other implications

Risk Management

28. There are no anticipated risks associated with this project.

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Approved

Wards Affected: Guildhall

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

- Annex A Plan of the Area
- Annex B Precis of the Drop in Session Comments and Suggestions
- Annex C E-mail correspondence in full (online only)
- Annex C1 Views (condensed) received by e-mail
- Annex D Door 84 Comments
- Annex E Location Plan of the Items in Option 3
- Annex E1 2 Zone Option Revised Plan
- Annex F Residents Parking Zones
- Annex G Regeneration statement

List of Abbreviations Used in this Report

- Exp. TRO Experimental Traffic Regulation Order
- TRO Traffic Regulation Order