

**Decision Session - Executive Member for
Transport**

29 August 2019

Report of the Assistant Director, Transport, Highways and Environment.

Micklegate Bar Experimental Traffic Regulation Order

Summary

1. To consider the representations made to the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order since it was introduced in December 2018.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that option 3a be approved:
 - The Experimental Traffic Regulation Order is made permanent and approval to carry out further investigations to enhance Micklegate.

Reason: Because the experiment achieved the aim of reducing the impact of traffic on Micklegate Bar and the representations made against the experiment did not highlight issues of concern regarding how the highway network operated overall. In addition, there is potential for further improvements to be made to the streetscape and appearance of Micklegate Bar and the rest of the street.

Background

3. The Experimental Traffic Regulation Order was introduced for a maximum period of 18 months from its start date in December last year.
4. Because there have been no changes made to the experiment for over 6 months we have the option of considering the representations made and if thought appropriate overturn those objections and make the experiment permanent.

Discussion

5. There have been 122 (to 24th July) representations made since the start of the experiment; these are outlined in Annex A along with officer

comments. Of those 122 representations 31 were objections, 9 were concerns about some element of how the experiment was operating and 82 were in support.

6. The most common themes for objection were:
 - Longer and more congested journeys for local residents.
 - Increase in pollution on the alternative routes.
 - The closure creates congestion on the alternative routes.
7. Whilst it is relevant to note the number of representation made in support of the experiment, the purpose of this report is to formally consider objections made, hence this isn't simply a matter of what is most popular.
8. It was fully appreciated during the development of the experimental proposal that for some there would be an increase in their journey length and time. These dis-benefits have to be considered alongside the reduction in the traffic impact on the Bar, the perceived improvements in the local Micklegate environment due to the reduction in through traffic and the improvements for cyclists at the Micklegate Bar junction.
9. Whilst normally an experiment might have a quantifiable benefit such as increased capacity at a junction in this case the impact is more subjective and can't be readily analysed in numerical terms to give a definitive transport related benefit. Hence in traffic management terms there is no right or wrong conclusion. Instead the benefits have to be weighed up in terms of the "look and feel" of the outcome on the local environment. Clearly views on the outcome will be varied depending on an individual's point of view and undoubtedly there will be some who will have experienced a dis-benefit due to the increased length and duration of their journey. The perceived benefits of the experiment are the reduction in traffic dominance in Micklegate overall but especially at the Bar making a more pleasant environment and cyclists not being held up at the Bar due to vehicles queuing in the narrow cycle lane under the bar.
10. It was previously reported that in a 12 hour period (7am to 7pm) there was a total of around 4300 vehicle trips split roughly 60:40 (inbound:outbound) hence 2580 inbound and 1720 outbound. In a survey carried out in May this year the inbound number averaged over a Monday to Friday period was slightly lower at around 2240 vehicles. Outbound the volume dropped to 460 vehicles per day of which about 98% were pedal cycles. The other 2% of vehicles were either leaving premises on the out of town side of the bar or had carried out an illegal movement. In summary, the overall

reduction in motor vehicles using Micklegate bar is in the order of 1250 over the 7am to 7pm period each day.

11. When the experiment was first considered one of the aims had been to maintain this as a route cyclists could use. During the experiment it has been noticed and commented on by some of those in support of the closure that the cycle only phase of the traffic light sequence has had the effect of removing the conflict/anxiety for cyclists due to being mixed in with motor vehicles along Blossom Street heading out of the city. This has been an unexpected but welcome benefit from the experimental closure.
12. It should also be noted that it has been possible to reduce the amount of green light time at Micklegate Bar or omit that stage of the signals if there are no cyclists waiting. This has allowed a small additional green time to be allocated to the other arms of the junction and will therefore have had some positive mitigating effect on the capacity and vehicle related pollution throughout the day. However, there are too many factors in the environment, makeup and operation of traffic at the junction to provide reliable figures for comparison.
13. Annex B shows the letters of support from The York Civic Trust, the Micklegate Business Initiative, York Environment Forum Transport Group and York Cycle Campaign.
14. Annex C is a lengthy objection that was considered appropriate to reproduce in its entirety. It covers concerns over: the lack of consultation, lack of clarity of the aims of the scheme, lack of adequate consideration of alternatives, lack of consideration of the impact of the scheme on other areas and lack of adequate measurement of outcome of the scheme. Officer comments on this objection are included at the end of Annex C.
15. During the early stages of the experiment there were regular reports of drivers choosing to exit the city by travelling the wrong way through the inbound arch. Additional measures were put in place to more clearly state the restriction on direction of travel at this point. Whilst these measures appear to have reduced the incidence of this happening there are still some drivers who choose to ignore the restriction. Taking enforcement action against driver abusing the restriction is not something the City Council has the authority to carry out; hence this issue has been brought to the attention of the Police for them to consider when allocating their resources for traffic enforcement. Due to the low vehicle speeds at this location the risk of a collision is not considered an issue of concern.
16. There were also intermittent reports of the traffic signals not detecting cyclists at the junction heading out of town. Action was taken to improve

cycle detection but if this issue deteriorates again an alternative method of detection will be considered.

17. There have been a number of suggestions and requests to make further improvements in addition to confirming making the closure permanent. No work has been carried out on what improvements could be considered suitable to improve the streetscape and setting of Micklegate Bar or what further action along Micklegate might be acceptable. It is suggested that if the closure is made permanent then further work be commissioned to bring forward a number of options at a later date for consideration.

Consultation

18. In line with the decision regarding taking forward the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order, letters were delivered to a wider area (see Annex D) than is usual for Traffic Regulation Order consultations, outlining the experimental closure process and giving details of where to send any representations on the experimental scheme. A sign was also put in place at the Bar with a web address for further information on the scheme and how to make a representation.
19. In addition, a further letter was issued in July 2019 to advise that the scheme was due to be reported on with the potential for it to be made permanent so any updated or new representations should be sent in by mid August for consideration.
20. This action exceeds the legal requirements for consultation and no further consultation is required. Before a decision can be made to make the experiment permanent however the objections put forward have to be considered.

Options

21. Option 1 – continue the experiment and bring back a report at a later date. This is not the recommended option because the experiment has already achieved the aim of reducing the impact of traffic on the Bar.
22. Option 2 – amend and continue the experiment. The experiment has achieved the aim of reducing the impact of traffic on the Bar. Whilst a variation could be considered if it was less successful there is insufficient time in the experimental period to revert back to this scheme and run it for another 6 months. If additional measures are thought desirable to explore these could be investigated and a further scheme brought forward for consideration at a later date as either a new experiment or a permanent

Traffic Regulation Order change. Hence this is not the recommended option.

23. Option 3 - make the current Experimental TRO permanent. Whilst this could be recommended there is potential for further enhancements if the closure is confirmed hence this is not the recommended option.
24. Option 3a – as option 3 above make the experimental closure permanent, but also approve the investigation of additional works to enhance the streetscape and appearance of the Bar, plus potential changes for the rest of Micklegate. This investigation would be brought back to a subsequent Executive Member for Transport and Planning meeting. This is the recommended option because the experiment has achieved the aim of reducing the impact of traffic on the Bar and enabled further measures to be considered.
25. Option 4 – end the experiment and return the operation of the highway to how it was before the experiment was put in place. This is not the recommended option because the experiment has achieved the aim of reducing the impact of traffic on the Bar.

Council Plan

26. The above proposal contributes to the City Council's Council Plan of:
 - A prosperous city for all,
 - A council that listens to residents

Implications

27. This report has the following implications:

Financial – None.

Human Resources – None.

Equalities – None.

Legal – None.

Crime and Disorder – None

Information Technology - None

Land – None

Other – None

Risk Management

28. None.

Contact Details

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Date:

24/7/2019

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

None.

Wards Affected: Micklegate

For further information please contact the author of the report.

Background Papers: None.

Annexes:

Annex A Précis of Representations Made and Officer Comments

Annex B Representations in support of the Experiment from Organisations

Annex C Objection and Officers Comments

Annex D Plan of the letter drop consultation area.