Norfolk County Council

Record of Individual Cabinet Member Decision

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Plant (Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure & Transport)

Background and Purpose:

Changes to vehicle access were introduced in several streets in Norwich in July 2020 as part of reopening the city centre following the COVID-19 pandemic, with these changes mainly focussing on St Benedict's Street and Exchange Street, providing space for pavement licences from adjacent businesses, as well as more space for walking, wheeling and cycling.

Vehicular access on St Benedict's Street is permitted for loading only at all times between St Margarets Street and the eastern end of St Benedict's Street. Exchange Street is closed to all vehicular traffic (with some exceptions for access) between 10am and 4pm every day. Outside of these hours, access for loading is permitted with dedicated loading bays provided on street. Initially implemented as an emergency social distancing measure, these trials have remained in place through to today.

The Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) which has enabled these arrangements on both streets is due to expire on 18 November 2023. A decision is therefore needed whether to make these arrangements permanent or to revert to the arrangements in place pre-July 2020.

Consideration has been given to feedback received through the ETRO process and how well these schemes have met the aims and objectives set out in the 'Connecting the Norwich Lanes' proposals and the County Council's Local Transport Plan. It is recommended that the trial arrangements on St Benedict's Street are made permanent. However, a poor level of compliance on Exchange Street, coupled with a current lack of further funding to mitigate safety concerns that have arisen and the imminent expiration of the ETRO which cannot be extended, means that it is recommended that the trial arrangements on Exchange Street, Pottergate and Gaol Hill are removed.

Recommendations:

- 1. Proceed with making the current access arrangements on St Benedict's Street, Upper Goat Lane, Queen Street and William Booth Street permanent.
- 2. Proceed with making the current waiting restrictions in place on St Benedict's Street and Gaol Hill permanent.
- 3. Proceed with making the start of the loading time 4pm rather than 5pm permanent.

- 4. Proceed with reverting to the previous access arrangements in place pre-July 2020 on Bedford Street, Little London Street, London Street, -Gaol Hill, Pottergate and Exchange Street.
- 5. Proceed with reverting to the previous waiting restrictions in place pre-July 2020 on Exchange Street.

Is it a key decision? No

Is it subject to call-in? Yes

If Yes – the deadline for call-in is: 4pm Tuesday 17 October 2023

Impact of the Decision:

The decision will result in the following impacts on the highway

Proceeding with a permanent order for access arrangements for St Benedict's Street, Queen Street and Upper Goat Lane will mean that the current arrangements to access these streets will remain in place.

Proceeding with a permanent order for the experimental waiting restrictions on St Benedict's Street, Gaol Hill and St Margarets Street will mean that the current waiting/parking arrangements on these streets will remain in place:

- St Benedict's Street no waiting or loading at any time except in designated loading bays, with car club spaces. No entry from Charing Cross.
- Gaol Hill goods vehicle loading only.
- St Margarets Street designated untimed loading bay.

Proceeding with reverting the experimental access arrangements on Bedford Street, Little London Street, London Street, Gaol Hill and Exchange Street will mean that the existing arrangements will be changed back to the previous arrangements in place:

- Bedford Street pedestrian zone except for blue badges and loading access at all times.
- Gaol Hill open to all traffic (goods vehicle loading bays to be retained).
- Little London Street pedestrian zone except for blue badges and loading access at all times.
- Exchange Street open to all traffic (waiting restrictions and one-way to be retained).

Proceeding with reverting the loading arrangements on Exchange Street will mean that the existing arrangements will be changed back to the previous arrangements in place, which were:

 No loading at any time except for in the designated loading bay opposite Jarrold's 30 minutes maximum stay Mon-Sat 7:30am to 6:30pm. Any parking permitted outside of these times. • The east side of Exchange Street between Bedford Street and St Andrews Street Monday-Saturday before 7:30am, between 9:30am and 4:30pm or after 6:30pm.

Evidence and reason for the decision:

As set out in the attached report.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

As set out in the attached report.

Financial, Resource or other implications considered:

As set out in the attached report.

Record of any conflict of interest:

None

Background documents:

None

Date of Decision: 06/10/2023

Publication Date of Decision: 10/10/2023

Signed by Cabinet Member:

I confirm that I have made the decision set out above, for the reasons also set out.

Signed:

Print name: Cllr Graham Plant

Date: 06/10/2023

Accompanying documents:

Decision Making Report

Once you have completed your internal department clearance process and obtained agreement of the Cabinet Member, send your completed decision notice together with the report and green form to committees@norfolk.gov.uk

Individual Cabinet Member Decision Report

Item No:

Report Title: Norwich City Centre Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs)

Date of Meeting: N/A

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Plant (Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure & Transport)

Responsible Director: Grahame Bygrave, (Interim Executive Director for Community and Environmental Services)

Is this a Key Decision? No

If this is a Key Decision, date added to the Forward Plan of Key Decisions: N/A

Executive Summary / Introduction from Cabinet Member

Changes to vehicle access were introduced in several streets in Norwich in July 2020 as part of reopening the city centre following the COVID-19 pandemic, with these changes mainly focussing on St Benedict's Street and Exchange Street, providing space for pavement licences from adjacent businesses, as well as more space for walking, wheeling and cycling.

Vehicular access on St Benedict's Street is permitted for loading only at all times between St Margarets Street and the eastern end of St Benedict's Street. Exchange Street is closed to all vehicular traffic (with some exceptions for access) between 10am and 4pm every day. Outside of these hours, access for loading is permitted with dedicated loading bays provided on street. Initially implemented as an emergency social distancing measure, these trials have remained in place through to today.

The Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) which has enabled these arrangements on both streets is due to expire on 18 November 2023. A decision is therefore needed whether to make these arrangements permanent or to revert to the arrangements in place pre-July 2020.

Consideration has been given to feedback received through the ETRO process and how well these schemes have met the aims and objectives set out in the 'Connecting the Norwich Lanes' proposals and the County Council's Local Transport Plan. It is recommended that the trial arrangements on St Benedict's Street are made permanent. However, a poor level of compliance on Exchange Street, coupled with a current lack of further funding to mitigate safety concerns that have arisen and the imminent expiration of the ETRO which cannot be extended, means that it is recommended that the trial arrangements on Exchange Street, Pottergate and Gaol Hill are removed.

Recommendations:

- 1. Proceed with making the current access arrangements on St Benedict's Street, Upper Goat Lane, Queen Street and William Booth Street permanent.
- 2. Proceed with making the current waiting restrictions in place on St Benedict's Street and Gaol Hill permanent.
- 3. Proceed with making the start of the loading time 4pm rather than 5pm permanent.
- 4. Proceed with reverting to the previous access arrangements in place pre-July 2020 on Bedford Street, Little London Street, London Street, Gaol Hill, Pottergate and Exchange Street.
- 5. Proceed with reverting to the previous waiting restrictions in place pre-July 2020 on Exchange Street.

1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1 An Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) is currently in place on St Benedict's Street and Exchange Street, as well as several other connecting streets, to trial public realm improvements through the provision of outdoor seating space and more space to walk, wheel and cycle. Details of the measures introduced are shown on the plans attached as Appendices A & B
- 1.2 In order to provide these improvements in walking, wheeling and cycling and the public realm:
 - access for most vehicles is currently not permitted on Exchange Street between 10am and 4pm, with access for loading only outside of these times.
 - Loading and access only is permitted at all times on St Benedict's Street east of St Margarets Street. The east end of St Benedict's Street has been closed to all vehicles to remove through traffic, with dedicated loading bays provided with access via St Margarets Street.
- 1.3 The ETRO also applies to other streets connected to Exchange Street and / or St Benedict's Street in order to maintain access to businesses and other properties, as well as to ensure traffic uses alternative appropriate routes. This includes:

- Provision of a loading access loop via Pottergate, Lobster Lane, Bedford Street, Little London Street and London Street to enable vehicles less than 3.5 tonnes to access businesses along these streets for loading / unloading at all times.
- Changing the loading only arrangements on Gaol Hill outside Norwich Market to be for goods vehicles only, to improve access for market traders.
- Reversing the one-way on Upper Goat Lane to minimise inappropriate vehicle traffic.
- Changing city centre loading restrictions (e.g., Gentlemen's Walk) to end at 4pm instead of 5pm based on feedback from local businesses to provide consistency of access across the area. Queen Street has additional restrictions between 7pm and 3am.
- 1.4 The ETRO is set to expire on 18 November 2023. A decision is therefore needed whether to make these changes permanent or revert the roads to the previous arrangements that were in place pre-July 2020.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 Proceed with making the current experimental traffic access arrangements in place on St Benedict's Street, Upper Goat Lane, Queen Street and William Booth Street permanent.
- 2.2 Proceed with making the current waiting restrictions in place on St Benedict's Street and Gaol Hill permanent.
- 2.3 Proceed with making the start of the loading time 4pm rather than 5pm permanent
- 2.4 Proceed with reverting to the previous traffic access arrangements in place pre-July 2020 on Bedford Street, Little London Street, London Street, Gaol Hill, Pottergate and Exchange Street.
- 2.5 Proceed with reverting to the previous waiting restrictions on Exchange Street pre-July 2020.

3. Impact of the Proposal

- 3.1 Proceeding with a permanent order for access arrangements for St Benedict's Street, Queen Street and Upper Goat Lane will mean that the current arrangements to access these streets will remain in place.
- 3.2 Proceeding with a permanent order for the experimental waiting restrictions on St Benedict's Street, Gaol Hill and St Margarets Street will mean that the current waiting/parking arrangements on these streets will remain in place:

- St Benedict's Street no waiting or loading at any time except in designated loading bays, with car club spaces. No entry from Charing Cross.
- Gaol Hill goods vehicle loading only.
- St Margarets Street designated untimed loading bay.
- 3.3 Proceeding with reverting the experimental access arrangements on Bedford Street, Little London Street, London Street, Gaol Hill and Exchange Street will mean that the existing arrangements will be changed back to the previous arrangements in place:
 - Bedford Street pedestrian zone except for blue badges and loading access at all times.
 - Gaol Hill open to all traffic (goods vehicle loading bays to be retained).
 - Little London Street pedestrian zone except for blue badges and loading access at all times.
 - Exchange Street open to all traffic (waiting restrictions and one-way to be retained).
- 3.4 Proceeding with reverting the loading arrangements on Exchange Street will mean that the existing arrangements will be changed back to the previous arrangements in place, which were:
 - No loading at any time except for in the designated loading bay opposite Jarrold's 30 minutes maximum stay Mon-Sat 7:30am to 6:30pm. Any parking permitted outside of these times.
 - The east side of Exchange Street between Bedford Street and St Andrews Street Monday-Saturday before 7:30am, between 9:30am and 4:30pm or after 6:30pm.

4. Evidence and Reasons for Decision

- 4.1 These trials were originally implemented as an emergency Traffic Regulation Order in July 2020 to provide more social distancing space and outdoor eating space amid the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4.2 In summer 2021, there was a public consultation relating to a series of projects outlined in the 'Connecting the Norwich Lanes' proposals, which included the trial arrangements in this area. Details of response are available in the paper presented to the January 2022 Transport for Norwich Advisory Committee (see background papers).
- 4.3 The Transport for Norwich Advisory Committee in January 2022 supported, via a majority vote, the proposals to keep these arrangements in place.
- 4.4 An ETRO was implemented in order to enable feedback to be sought and considered, particularly scheme elements such as the Pottergate loading loop and increasing the loading window by starting at 4pm instead of 5pm. A further

12-month long consultation period was open between June 2022 and May 2023 as a requirement of the ETRO, with 42 respondents contacting us by email. The general themes raised were;

- Lack of enforcement of the restrictions in Exchange Street.
- Disabled access to Exchange Street.
- Concerns about congestion in Cleveland Road / Bethel Street.
- Perception of an overall negative impact on air quality in the general area.
- Detrimental impact on Hackney Carriage and private hire drivers and customers.
- Detrimental impact for businesses of no daytime delivery access on Exchange Street.
- 4.5 During the ETRO consultation period, a petition with 34 signatures was received requesting taxis be permitted to use Exchange Street. The response to this petition was that it would be considered as part of the evaluation of the scheme.
- 4.6 As part of monitoring of the ETRO, a traffic survey was undertaken of Exchange Street on Friday 13th and Saturday 14th January 2023 to establish the level of compliance with the pedestrian and cycle zone. The weather on Friday was fine and dry, on Saturday cloudy with some rain.
- 4.7 The results of the survey showed that on the Friday, 673 vehicles used Exchange Street in the 24-hour period, with 29% of these passing along Exchange Street between 10am 4pm when no vehicles should enter (unless exempt). Of the remaining 71% of vehicles using Exchange Street after 4pm or before 10am, only 7% of those were carrying out legitimate loading activity.
- 4.8 On the Saturday, 975 vehicles used Exchange Street in the 24-hour period, with 46% of vehicles passing through the pedestrian and cycle zone between 10am 4pm and 54% either before 10am or after 4pm, during the permitted times for loading but with only 4% of those observed to be carrying out legitimate loading activity. This means that in the 48-hour survey period covering both days, only 56 vehicles (3% of the total traffic observed) used Exchange Street legitimately for loading purposes. This represents a very poor level of compliance.
- 4.9 In 2023, a bid for funding via the Levelling Up Fund to redesign the road layout on Exchange Street and Gaol Hill was made, with an objective of resolving outstanding safety concerns around conflicts between vehicles turning round on Gaol Hill amongst people walking and cycling in a busy pedestrian area to avoid the Exchange Street closure. It would also create a high quality public realm area for walking, wheeling and cycling that would help deter illegal vehicle use. Unfortunately, this bid was not successful.

- 4.10 In April 2023, a traffic survey monitored vehicle queueing at the Cleveland Road / Chapel Field North exit onto the Grapes Hill roundabout between Thursday 7th April to Saturday 9th April, which was the Easter Bank Holiday weekend There were occasions where queues quickly formed, which then regularly completely cleared within short timescales, demonstrating the unpredictable nature of the highway network in this area. Whilst there is no monitoring data available for the Christmas period, given the volatility of the local network, there is potential for notable disruption.
- 4.11 The Police have enforced the restriction, initially through educating drivers with verbal warnings and clarification, then followed by the formal issuing of fixed penalty notices (FPN). The need to intervene has reduced, particularly once the approach to issue FPNs was introduced, but a persistent level of noncompliance remains.
- 4.12 The following considers the impacts of the ETRO trial against the objectives set out in the latest Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) for Norfolk:
 - Embracing the Future: This objective relates to the use of data to help inform how we manage and maintain the highway network. We have used survey data to show that although traffic queues form approaching the Grapes Hill roundabout, these are largely short in duration. This also highlights the unpredictable performance of the highway network in this area. Data has also been used to highlight levels of non-compliance, which have been persistent and significant for Exchange Street.
 - Delivering a Sustainable Norfolk: This objective focusses on ensuring new developments seek to preserve and enhance our built, natural and historic environment. The original proposals are consistent with this objective in terms of providing space for walking, wheeling and cycling in the city centre, removing the dominance of motor vehicles in this part of the city.
 - Enhancing Connectivity: This objective considers the strategic routes across the county. These proposals relate to local, city centre streets, so do not directly impact on this objective.
 - Enhancing Norfolk's Quality of Life: This objective focusses on improving air quality and encouraging active travel options. These proposals encourage walking, wheeling and cycling so contribute positively towards this objective. However, as these trials were initially implemented on an emergency basis to meet COVID social distancing requirements in place in 2020, this has meant there is a lack of evidence from before the trials were implemented to enable an evaluation of changes in traffic patterns and the consequential benefits and challenges. Although local concerns around emissions from queueing traffic have been raised, an assessment of before and after is difficult to quantify for this reason. Improving the quality of place has been

- achieved by providing space for outdoor seating. This has been particularly strong on St Benedict's Street, with 9 active pavement licences for outdoor seating, with there being 3 pavement licenses on Exchange Street.
- Increasing Accessibility: Providing more space for walking, wheeling and cycling has been delivered through this trial. This is particularly important as both Exchange Street and St Benedict's Street are historical streets with footways that are not sufficiently wide enough for the levels of walking and wheeling that take place, making it difficult for people passing each other, as well as people using wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs during peak periods. However, the poor levels of compliance amongst vehicular traffic on Exchange Street has limited the ability for people walking, wheeling and cycling to use this additional space.
- Improving Transport Safety: The Council has adopted the safe systems approach to road safety, which consists of 5 pillars (safe speeds, safe roads, safe road users, safe vehicles and post-crash responses). While the objective of the trials was to provide safer routes for the high volumes of people walking, wheeling and cycling within the core city centre, the poor levels of compliance on Exchange Street and vehicles turning on Gaol Hill to avoid the closure means that this objective has not been fully met at this location.
- A Well Managed and Maintained Transport Network: this proposal is neutral in regard to this objective.
- 4.13 On balance, it has been assessed that the current arrangements on St Benedict's Street strongly meet the objectives set out in the LTP4. There are no strong overriding reasons as to why the current trial arrangements in that location could not be made permanent.
- 4.14 For Exchange Street, the poor level of compliance with the pedestrian and cycle zone means that some of the objectives could not be met in full. Attempts to secure additional funding to deliver public realm improvements that would help address safety concerns of vehicles turning on Gaol Hill, as well as the poor level of compliance with the pedestrian and cycle zone on Exchange Street, have not been achieved in the timeframe before a decision needs to be made on the ETRO.
- 4.15 The case for retaining the current arrangement for Exchange Street and associated streets is finely balanced. However, given the Council's statutory duty to take reasonable measures to ensure the safe passage along a highway is not endangered, retention of the current arrangement is not recommended, and the streets should return to their pre-July 2020 arrangements as shown on the plan attached as Appendix C

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 The ETRO could be reverted on St Benedict's Street, meaning that the walking, cycling and public realm improvements would be removed allowing vehicular traffic to use this route again. This option would not meet the LTP4 objectives as outlined in Section 4.
- 5.2 The pedestrian and cycle zone on Exchange Street could be made permanent. However, the persistent levels of non-compliance and vehicle turning movements on Gaol Hill negatively impact on the safe passage of those walking, wheeling and cycling in the area. For this reason, this option is not recommended.
- 5.3 The current loading restrictions on Exchange Street could be retained (while reverting the access arrangements so that all vehicular traffic can pass through Exchange Street at all times). However, this was discounted on the basis that it needs to be clear to all highway users, including people walking, wheeling and cycling, that the pedestrian and cycle zone has been removed. With a higher volume of traffic anticipated, it was also not considered safe to retain the existing railings, bollards and planters which could obscure vulnerable road users looking to cross the road from the drivers' view.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There will be a cost to reverting road signs, markings, bollards and railings to the previous arrangement in place on Exchange Street pre-July 2020. This cost will be funded within the Highways Capital budget.

7. Resource Implications

- 7.1 Staff: NPLaw will need to be instructed to making permanent/reverting the relevant Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders and require 1 month to complete these changes in time for the deadline of 18 November 2023. Highway contractors will need to prioritise the removal and / or reinstatement of bollards, railings, planters, signs and road markings on Exchange Street.
- 7.2 Property: None identified.
- **7.3 IT**: None identified.

8. Other Implications

- **8.1 Legal Implications:** The Council has a statutory duty to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that the passage along the highway is not endangered under section 41 of the Highways Act 1980.
- **8.2** Human Rights Implications: None identified.

8.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (this must be included):

Norfolk County Council has a duty to pay due regard to equality when exercising its public functions. In promoting these proposals, we have considered the potential impact on local people, particularly disabled and older people and parents and carers of children and others who may have needs when using the public highway. Statutory consultation for the ETRO took place between June 2022 – May 2023. The consultation raised some issues relating to people with protected characteristics, particularly disabled people and those with restricted mobility. The EqIA has considered this feedback in conjunction with data available from traffic surveys and its findings are that the scheme will have both positive and detrimental impacts to people with protected characteristics.

8.4 Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA): Not required.

8.5 Health and Safety implications (where appropriate):

The current persistent level of non-compliance of vehicles within the pedestrian and cycle zone on Exchange Street, and vehicles turning on Gaol Hill, means that there is a risk of people being hurt as a result of unexpectedly encountering vehicles on the street. Removing the pedestrian and cycle zone will make it clear to people walking, wheeling and cycling that they should expect to encounter vehicles on Exchange Street.

8.6 Sustainability implications (where appropriate):

Implementing the cycling and walking improvements on St Benedict's Street will continue to promote the use of sustainable modes of transport in line with LTP4 objectives. However, removing the same provision on Exchange Street will not meet these objectives.

8.7 Any Other Implications:

The trials have split opinion amongst the public and businesses, particularly those measures installed on Exchange Street.

9. Risk Implications / Assessment

9.1 While the Council has set out objectives and priorities to promote sustainable transport choices in order to meet climate, air pollution and public health targets, the safety of all highway users is paramount.

10. Select Committee Comments

10.1 Not applicable.

11. Recommendations

- 1. Proceed with making the current access arrangements on St Benedict's Street, Upper Goat Lane, Queen Street and William Booth Street permanent.
- 2. Proceed to make the current waiting restrictions in place on St Benedict's Street and Gaol Hill permanent.
- Proceed with making the start of the loading time 4pm rather than 3. 5pm permanent.
- 4. Proceed with reverting to the previous access arrangements in place pre-July 2020 on Bedford Street, Little London Street, London Street, Gaol Hill, Pottergate and Exchange Street.
- Proceed with reverting to the previous waiting restrictions in place 5. pre-July 2020 on Exchange Street

12. Background Papers

- 12.1 Connecting the Norwich Lanes report (page 9) Transport for Norwich Joint Committee 13 January 2022.
- 12.2 Gear Change: A bold vision for walking and cycling Department for Transport July 2020.
- 12.3 Transport Decarbonisation Plan Department for Transport July 2021.

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained within this paper, please get in touch with:

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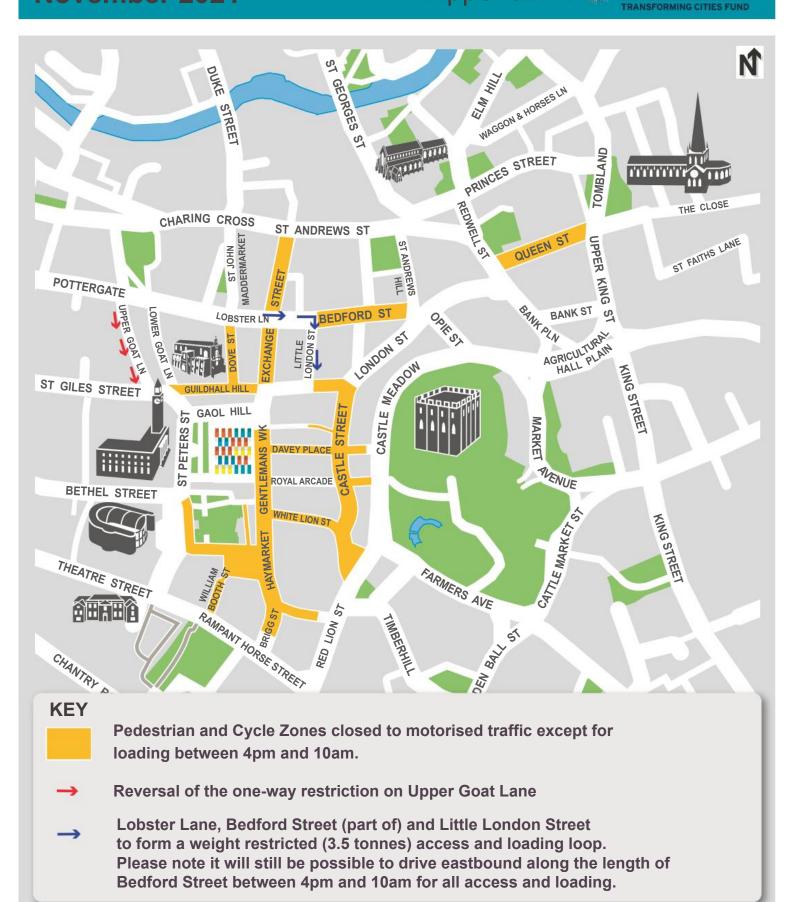
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Proposed changes to city centre loading and access

November 2021



Transport



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