
28 February 2012

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member (City Services) – Councillor Harvard

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of City Services and Development

Ward(s) affected:

St Michaels

Title:

Report: Response to petitions received concerning the 'Shared Space' concept

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

On 21 January 2011 Cabinet approved the proposal to make changes to transform the City Centre and assist in its regeneration as part of the Coventry 2012 Public Realm Improvements.

The aim is to provide high quality public realm linking development sites, visitor attractions and major facilities like the University and station. The changes to the look and feel of the streets will create a low speed, more pedestrian friendly and pleasing to the eye environment throughout the city centre, which will be supported by a 20mph zone. It should be noted that in response to suggestions made by Disabled Groups, Coventry has adopted some rather than all of the principles of the shared space concept.

Two petitions have been received requesting additional information and consultation along with the reversal of the 'Shared Space Schemes' within the City Centre. A third petition has been received in favour of keeping the 'Shared Spaces'

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member is recommended to:

1. Endorse the continued implementation of the 'low speed environment' principle, as part of the public realm schemes associated with the Coventry 2012 project.
2. Approve continued detailed monitoring of the new road layouts through traffic, personal injury accident, pedestrian and speed data surveys.

3. Approve funding allocation to the Visual and Impairment Team to provide additional rehabilitation resources to retrain visually impaired service users to enable them to be confident that they can use the new road layouts safely.

Other useful background papers:

Cabinet Reports, 21 January 2011, copies available on www.Coventry.gov.uk.

Public Report 5 - Title: Coventry 2012 – The Olympics Legacy

Public Report 6 - Title: Coventry 2012 – Public Realm

Cabinet Member report, 12 April 2011 copies available on www.Coventry.gov.uk.

Public Report 4 – Title: Report - Objections to proposed Traffic Regulation Orders relating to the Coventry 2012 Public Realm and Olympic Legacy

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

Disabled Access Group Panel

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title:

Report: Response to petitions received concerning the 'Shared Space' concept.

1. Context

- 1.1 A total of three petitions have been received, two of which are against and one for the recently introduced and ongoing Coventry 2012 Public Realm Scheme works within the City Centre.

The first Petition comprising a paper petition and ePetition titled *"Seeking further information and consultation regarding Shared Space concept and legal implications for drivers and pedestrians when no rights of way / stops are defined"* bearing 146 paper signatures and 16 e-signatures.

The second Petition comprising a paper petition and ePetition titled *"Reverse the Shared Space experiments within the City Centre, and urgently bring back controlled crossings"* bearing 360 paper signatures and 165 e-signatures, submitted by Councillor Nellist, a St. Michael's Ward Councillor. The ePetition will expire on 27th February 2012. The final number of signatories will be verbally updated at the time of the meeting.

The third ePetition titled *"Keep the 'Shared Spaces' experiment"* has received 8 signatures and will expire on 27th February 2012. The final number of signatories will be verbally updated at the time of the meeting. It is worth highlighting that this petition has run for a much shorter period of time than the above two petitions.

- 1.2 The City's Olympic Games status has assisted in the opportunity to access European Regional Development Funding to enable these public realm schemes to be implemented, and therefore accelerating the Council's long term vision to regenerate the City Centre. These works entail redesigning the public realm with wider footways and new road layouts to create a 'low speed environment', including the removal of all unnecessary signs, lines and barriers ('decluttering'). A City Centre wide approach is being taken to ensure we have high quality public realm linking shopping areas, visitor attractions, development sites and major facilities such as the railway station and Coventry University. This includes the City Centre becoming a 20mph zone which will improve safety for all road users especially pedestrians.
- 1.3 The Department for Transport (DfT) are working closely with Coventry to trial a significantly different 20mph zone. This scheme aims to provide a 20mph zone without physical traffic management features but by designing out speed using many of the principles set out in the Manual for Streets guidance, to provide safer and more attractive streets. The 20mph zone requires a special sign authorisation from the Secretary of State and a new gateway sign has been designed for this purpose.
- 1.4 The works also include a review of all the existing waiting/parking restrictions and it is proposed to double on-street parking, including a substantial increase in disabled parking spaces from 12 to 42, in locations within the City Centre where disabled people need them. Additional on street parking will also assist to slow through-traffic speeds. A traffic regulation order to revise the waiting restrictions will be advertised shortly.
- 1.5 The 'decluttering' includes the removal of traffic signals in some locations. At these locations works to encourage drivers to slow down have been or will be implemented. These include significant carriageway narrowing and the use of street furniture to further visually narrow the carriageway, such as the use of reflective concrete spheres.
- 1.6 The public realm schemes implemented such as the layouts at the Hales Street junction and Gosford Street junction are not full shared space schemes as they still maintain the traditional segregation of footway and carriageway. Pedestrians and vehicles are therefore separated by the presence of a 40mm kerb face and formalised pedestrian crossing points are provided to assist pedestrians with crossing the road.

The decision not to provide a 'full' shared space layout was taken following early engagement with Disabled Groups and taking onboard guidance from recent Department for Transport publications. The feedback received was to retain a kerb upstand between the footway and road to assist visually impaired pedestrians with negotiating around the junctions. However some of the principles of shared space schemes have been utilised in these improvement schemes whereby the removal of traffic control and priority means drivers are forced to slow down and interact with each other to create a 'low speed environment' layout.

1.7 Coventry's new street layouts embrace the guidance set out within recent publications, such as the Department for Transport Manual for Streets and Manual for Streets 2, along with Department for Transport Local Transport Note 1/11 Shared Spaces. This guidance details the full spectrum of 'Shared Space' schemes from simple de-cluttering of the highway through to full shared space, where no delineation between footways and the road is provided resulting in pedestrians and vehicles mixing freely. The objectives of the Public Realm schemes are, to introduce a low speed environment that sits within the midpoint of this spectrum, whereby the works comprise the reduction in street furniture clutter and improve the streetscape through the provision of high quality materials and design, but not force pedestrians and vehicles to mix through a level surface. The key aim being the reduction in vehicles speeds down to an appropriate level for a city centre environment, and in turn create a more pleasant and safer environment for all road users.

1.8 In addition the Highway Code also sets out clear advice to motorists with respect to the requirement to be more aware of pedestrians. The latest revision of the Highway Code specifically states:

'The most vulnerable road users are pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders... It is particularly important to be aware of children, older and disabled people, and learner and inexperienced drivers and riders. There is a risk of pedestrians, especially children, stepping unexpectedly into the road. You should drive with the safety of children in mind at a speed suitable for the conditions.'

Drive carefully and slowly when:

- *in crowded shopping streets, Home Zones and Quiet Lanes or residential areas*
- *turning at road junctions; give way to pedestrians who are already crossing the road into which you are turning'* (The Official Highway Code 2007)

1.9 There has been concern expressed about the safety of the new junction type. The fact that people perceive and acknowledge that there is need to exercise caution is a major benefit as they immediately pay more attention. A number of comments have been received where people say that they have to be 'more careful' through the junctions now, this is a major benefit.

The previous junction layouts did have a poor injury accident record, and the following collision summaries highlight this fact:

- 219 Injury accidents were recorded within the City Centre over the full five year period prior to the public realm works, resulting in 271 casualties.
- Of these collisions 104 pedestrian casualties were recorded during this time.
- 120 Injury accidents were recorded at traffic signal controlled junctions or traffic signal controlled crossings within the City Centre over the full five year period prior to the public realm works.

- A total of 16 Injury collisions were recorded at the existing eight zebra crossings located within the City Centre over the same period. (Rate of 0.4 collisions per year)
- Whereas 23 injury collisions were recorded occurring at the existing six stand-alone pelican / puffin crossings within the City Centre over the same period. (Rate of 0.77 collisions per year). This is nearly double the rate of injury collisions recorded when compared to zebra crossings within the City Centre.

1.10 There is clear evidence to demonstrate the safety benefits of schemes similar to the type we are introducing. The best UK example is Ashford in Kent where part of the ring road was redesigned along similar lines. Monitoring over the first three years has shown a 75% drop in recorded injury accidents. Another example being the similar layouts and removal of traffic signal junctions in Drachten, Holland which yielded an average injury accident reduction of around a third, where the accident rate reduced over time showing as drivers get used to the operation of the junction the speed and risk of conflict is reduced.

1.11 All Coventry 2012 Public Realm Schemes will continue to be monitored once implemented, this will include speed data collection, recorded injury collision data analysis, road safety audits at all stages and responding to any feedback received from partners and members of the public.

1.12 As part of the budget provision for the public realm works, funding has been set aside for the Visual and Impairment Team to provide additional rehabilitation resources to retrain visually impaired service users to enable them to safely negotiate the new road layouts provided, and hence ultimately achieve greater levels of confidence for visually impaired pedestrians to negotiate around the City Centre.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

2.1 The options available are:

- (i) Continue with the implementation of 'low speed environment' Public Realm Schemes as planned.
- (ii) Suspend the current programme pending review and implementation of possible changes;
- (iii) Reintroduce traffic signal control and controlled pedestrian crossing facilities as per the original layouts.

2.2 Option 1 - Continue with the implementation of 'low speed environment' Public Realm Schemes.

2.2.1 The introduction of these 'low speed environment' public realm schemes is a new concept for Coventry, but is a well established practice at a number of locations throughout the country and internationally. Current design guidance publications such as Manual for Streets 2 and Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/11 detail the significant benefits in designing 'better streets'. Relevant key finding from some of this research is shown below:

2.2.2 *'Enhancing street environments through high quality public realm incorporating local materials and historic street features, removal of clutter and pedestrian barriers, use of shared space where appropriate and enhanced street lighting can help to stimulate local economic activity, reduce street crime and encourage more local, shorter distance travel on foot or by cycle.'* (Manual for Streets 2 2010 Page 9).

Early results across a number of different indicators show that all of the mixed priority route demonstration schemes have been successful in meeting their stated objectives; Safety: all schemes have achieved a substantial casualty reduction of between 24% and 60%, Environment: noise and air quality measurements have shown improvements, Accessibility: pedestrian and cycling activity has increased, children and mobility impaired users generally feel more confident; and Economy: improvements in the quality of streetscape have led to a reduction in vacant premises and a more vibrant local economy.' (Manual for Streets 2 2010 Page 10).

'Research into mixed use high streets carried out by University of Westminster has shown that they are well used and well liked by local people and encourage sustainable and inclusive patterns of living. Resolving the challenges of balancing movement and place functions will result in these streets becoming the cornerstone of sustainable communities.' (Manual for Streets 2 2010 Page 11).

'Vehicle speed has a significant influence on pedestrians' willingness to share the space and drivers' willingness to give way to pedestrians (and others). As vehicle speeds decrease, the proportion of drivers giving way increases, so the street becomes more shared.' (LTN 1/11 Page 13)

The Manual for Streets 2 guidance document also details a number of successful case studies where similar layouts have been introduced, comparable examples being Walworth Road, Southwark, London and London Road, Southampton. Both of these examples demonstrate well designed layouts can achieve lower speeds, reduced injury accident rates and increased pedestrian footfall. Widened footways also provide additional space to accommodate increased pedestrian footfall, along with allowing space for café style seating and 'spill out' activity.

The new high quality public realm road layouts at the Hales Street Scheme and Gosford Street Scheme are designed intentionally to remove all indications of vehicle priority, so that drivers approaching the junctions are forced to slow down and interact with each other. The success of these no priority layouts relies on motorists proceeding through the junction with caution. It is this uncertainty for drivers that ensures vehicle movements are reduced to very low speeds and drivers exercise more care when manoeuvring through the junction.

Where appropriate, at junctions where controlled pedestrian crossing facilities were in place prior to the improvement works, controlled pedestrian controlled facilities will be retained at the junctions in the form of zebra crossings, along with a number of new additional controlled zebra crossings located at key pedestrian crossing locations throughout the City Centre.

It is too early to fully conclude on the relative success of this type of scheme in Coventry, however early data collection at the Gosford Street Scheme has shown mean speeds to have dropped by nearly 6mph to an average of 18mph. In addition observations on the traffic flow at the new junction layouts have shown that the removal of the traffic signal control has significantly improved operating efficiencies, with no vehicle queuing observed at peak periods.

This is the recommended option.

2.3 Option 2 - Suspend the current programme pending review and implementation of possible changes

2.3.1 To realise the full benefits of the Coventry 2012 public realm project it is essential that all of the elements of the project are in place as we are seeking to create a transformation of the city centre environment to encourage low speeds. It is only when all elements are in place (including wider decluttering) that it will be possible to judge the impact and success of the scheme. As stated in paragraph 1.11, we will continuously monitor the scheme as it is implemented and respond to any changes that are deemed necessary. All elements of the scheme will also undergo a 4 stage safety audit (two pre and two post implementation).

2.3.2 This option is not recommended for these reasons.

2.4 Option 3 - Reintroduce traffic signal control and controlled pedestrian crossing facilities as per the existing layouts.

2.4.1 The reintroduction of traffic signal control would see the many benefits already realised on the new road layouts being lost, such as more space for pedestrians, improved traffic flow and journey times around the city centre, reduced vehicle speeds through the junctions and a de-cluttered streetscape.

2.4.2 The previous traffic signal controlled junctions within the City Centre attracted a high number of collisions located at traffic signal controlled junctions, with circa 120 personal injury accidents recorded for the full calendar years of 2006 to 2010 inclusive, 94 of which involved pedestrians. In addition the junctions of Gosford Street and Hales Street have been identified as locations for potential accident reduction schemes as part of the annual collision review undertaken. The Gosford Street junction did not previously benefit from having controlled pedestrian crossing facilities incorporated within the traffic signals. Analysis of the collisions at these two junctions highlights a disproportionately high number of accidents involving vulnerable road users. Therefore the reintroduction of traffic signal control would not guarantee a safer environment for all road users, as the original traffic signal controlled junction layouts incurred significant levels of recorded injury accidents.

2.4.3 The provision of traffic signalised pedestrian crossing facilities would aid pedestrians with visual impairments, in that the audible beep and tactile cone features of the controlled crossing provide an indication to visually impaired pedestrians as to the appropriate stage to cross. However, as statistics show the operation of the beeper or the tactile cone does not necessarily guarantee that the road is safe to cross. The zebra crossing facility offers a number of benefits over a traffic signalised crossing point, such as being a more effective speed reducing feature, improved traffic / pedestrian flows, less delay for pedestrians waiting to cross, and shorter crossing distances.

- 2.4.4 Accordingly the City Council are working with the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) to improve facilities for visually impaired pedestrians within the City Centre, through considering the implementation of measures such as the RNIB React Wayfinding system and evaluating options to improve zebra crossing layouts to provide further information to visually impaired pedestrians.
- 2.4.5 As part of the budget provision for the public realm works, funding has been set aside for the Visual and Impairment Team to provide additional rehabilitation resources to retrain visually impaired service users to enable them to safely negotiate the new road layouts provided, and hence ultimately achieve greater levels of confidence for visually impaired pedestrians to negotiate around the City Centre.
- 2.4.6 Therefore for the reasons outlined above this option is not recommended.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 A public exhibition was held from 24 January 2011 to 5 February 2011 in one of the premises in Shelton Square. Displays of concept drawings were provided and Officers were present to assist with queries. In addition, details were also provided on the City Council's Website.
- 3.2 The proposal schemes have been discussed at varying stages of design with the Access Development Group a sub panel of the Disabilities and Equalities Advisory Panel. Feedback from the group was subsequently incorporated within the scheme designs where appropriate.
- 3.3 Wider consultation on the proposed schemes was undertaken at a number of Ward Forums, along with the City Centre Stakeholder Group, Motorbike Users Group, The Coventry Society, Coventry Ambassadors, Coventry Cycling representatives, and Coventry University. Feedback from the respective groups was subsequently incorporated within the scheme designs where appropriate.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 If the recommended option is approved the identified public realm schemes will continue to be implemented in accordance with the programme within the 2012 / 2013 financial year, and monitoring of the schemes undertaken post completion.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Legal Services

- 5.1 Financial implications
The cost of the continued introduction of the proposed changes to the road layout, if approved, will be funded from the budget allocated for implementing the Coventry 2012 Legacy, which is funded from a combination of external grant and contributions, existing resources and additional corporate resources.
- 5.2 Legal implications
The primary legal duty on a highway authority is to keep its adopted highway network in good repair. It does not have a legal duty going beyond this to keep highway users safe. Those using the highway have a responsibility for taking care of their own safety and the safety of others they encounter e.g. to obey the 'Highway Code'. Essentially, the public use the highway at their own risk and it is for this reason that a compulsory system of insurance exists to compensate anyone who is injured by motor vehicles (see *Gorrington v Calderdale MBC (2004)*).

A highway authority will only be liable for designing a highway scheme, where the design is proven to be a causal factor in any accident and the standard of design fell well below what reasonably could have been expected. Where a scheme has been designed by qualified engineers, has followed established good practice, has taken account of prevailing DfT guidance and has been subjected to an appropriate risk assessment then it is unlikely that any negligence would be established.

6. Other implications

N/A

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

The Coventry 2012 Public Realm proposals contribute to the City Council's core aim of a prosperous Coventry, making Coventry an attractive and enjoyable place to be, encouraging a creative, active and vibrant city.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

There are fortnightly Coventry 2012 Public realm Programme Board meetings, which monitors all works and risks. The board has clear governance in terms of reporting and reports to the overall Coventry 2012 Board. The project is also listed on the Councils Corporate risk register

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

N/A

6.4 Equalities / EIA

An EIA has been undertaken on the Transportation and Programme (Public Realm Programme).

The proposals have been discussed at the Access Development Group a sub panel of the Disabilities and Equalities Advisory Panel, and feedback from the panels incorporated into the design process.

All designs are road safety audited at various stages during design. Safety Audits will also be undertaken on completion. In addition stage 4 road safety audits (undertaken once a scheme has been in operation for approx a year) will be undertaken.

The proposed Coventry 2012 Public Realm works which will reduce the speed limit within the City Centre, increase some footway widths, provide additional controlled crossings, create additional on street parking including more disabled parking bays, create a 'traffic free' environment in Broadgate and the resulting reduction in the volume of traffic utilising High Street will have a positive impact on the safety of all pedestrians in these areas.

Section 20(3) of the Equality Act 2010 states: "...where a provision, criterion or practice of [the Council] puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled [the Council is required] to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to avoid the disadvantage." In view of the comments above, the Council does not feel that the proposed scheme will put any disabled person at a "substantial disadvantage" in comparison with the current situation. The comments above also demonstrate how the Council has had regard to its duties under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, particularly the need to provide equality of opportunity between disabled persons and others and to take account of disability issues in developing the scheme.

One key objective of the public realm works is to provide a pleasant, safer and more inclusive environment for pedestrians to use and enjoy, with the aim of increasing footfall and assisting in the regeneration of the City Centre. Widened footways, narrower roads, reduced vehicle speeds and de-cluttered footways will greatly help improve pedestrian movement around the City Centre, with particular emphasis to disabled and visually impaired pedestrians.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

The introduction of a 20mph zone will create a safer more pleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists alike, and will encourage a greater level of modal shift towards more sustainable forms of transport.

The provision of a 20mph zone and replacement of traffic signalised junctions with zebra crossings will assist in reducing the Council's Carbon Footprint through the reduction of the amount of electrical connections in place.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

N/A

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