
Cabinet

29 November 2016

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for City Services – Councillor J Innes

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director of Place

Ward(s) affected:

Westwood, Earlsdon, Foleshill, Cheylesmore, Binley & Willenhall, Lower Stoke, Upper Stoke, Wyken, Holbrook's, Whoberley, St Michael's, Sherbourne and Radford.

Title:

Bus Lane Review

Is this a key decision?

Yes

Executive Summary:

In Coventry over the last 15 years there has been a 20% increase in traffic on the City's road network. This is reported by the Department for Transport on a quarterly and annual basis. In a recent report in the Sunday Times, traffic information company Inrix analysed congestion over the four-year period in 18 urban areas. Whilst London was reported as having the worst levels of congestion, Coventry was reported as having one of the fastest rising levels of congestion due to population and economic growth.

A further concern associated with high levels of traffic and congestion is the impact this has on air quality. The Environment Act 1995 made local authorities responsible for assessing air quality in their areas. If air quality in any area of the city was not good enough, the authority would need to declare an air quality management area (AQMA) and prepare an Action Plan to improve air quality. In 2009 the whole of Coventry was declared as an AQMA because of its high levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and therefore the authority was required to produce an Action Plan to tackle emissions generated by traffic as the main contributor to poor air quality.

The Traffic Management Act 2004 requires the Council to secure the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network. In the face of increasing congestion and air quality issues the Council is proposing to review the operation of all of its bus lanes to effectively fulfil its statutory duties under this Act.

There are currently 22 bus lanes in Coventry totalling 8 kilometres in length. In addition there are bus priority measures at 11 signalised junctions and there are 7 bus gates. All bus lanes are in operation 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Discussions have taken place with Transport for West Midlands (TfWM - formerly Centro) and representatives from the bus operators about how to approach the bus lane review. In July a group of councillors and council officers visited Liverpool to talk to their cabinet member and project manager and learn from their experiences of implementing a similar review of bus lanes in Liverpool.

Following on from these discussions, it is proposed to undertake an evidence based trial in 4 phases, each containing about 2km of bus lane. The first phase is expected to start in January 2017 and will run for 6 months; the bus lanes will be suspended using an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO).

During this 6 month period, journey time data for buses and all other vehicles will be collected along with bus punctuality and reliability. This data will be evaluated along with the pre-trial suspension journey time data. The results of the evaluation will be used to advise and enable the Cabinet Member for City Services to make a decision with regards to the permanent removal, or retention of these bus lanes.

During the trial and in order to reduce congestion and pollution, the City Council is committed to promoting bus travel and will work with Transport for West Midlands and the bus operators to develop and implement more effective means of improving bus journey time reliability and punctuality. This will include selective vehicle detection at traffic signals such as providing late running buses priority at signals.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the commencement of a review of the bus lanes in Coventry, as set out in this report.
2. Agree to monitor throughout the trial suspension period the effect of the trial and that a report detailing the results of this monitoring and any associated recommendations be presented to the Cabinet Member for City Services for a decision on whether the trial suspensions are made permanent or whether any of the bus lanes are re-instated.
3. Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for City Services for the continuation of the remaining 3 phases of the bus lane review.
4. Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for City Services to use existing Transportation and Highways Maintenance Capital Programme funding to undertake the necessary works to enable the proper suspension of bus lanes.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix A	Plan showing all the bus lanes in Coventry City
Appendix B	List of all bus lane in Coventry City
Appendix C	List of bus lanes removed
Appendix D	List of operational bus gates
Appendix E	List of bus priority signals
Appendix F	List of Removed bus priority signals and
Appendix G	Plan showing the bus lanes included in Phase 1
Appendix H	List of bus lanes for trial suspension Phase 1

Other useful background papers:

None

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?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Bus Lane Review

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 In Coventry over the last 15 years there has been a 20% increase in traffic on the City's road network. This increase is also reflected at a national level with annual motor vehicle traffic being at its highest level ever in 2015 ever with a 2.2% increase in traffic on the road network in a one year period. The Department for Transport explains the upward trend in traffic volumes is likely to be a result of growth in the UK economy, with GDP 2.2% higher in the year ending December 2015 than in the previous year. They also suggest that lower fuel prices may also have contributed to increased traffic. Locally, Coventry is one of the fastest growing cities with an expanding economy which is also putting pressure on the road network.
- 1.2 Further evidence of increasing problems on local roads was provided through the Inrix study for the Sunday Times. This showed congestion in Coventry to be rising faster than almost anywhere else; this is partly a product of roadworks like Toll Bar, but is also due to the growth of the city and its economy.
- 1.3 A further concern associated with high levels of traffic and congestion is the impact this has on air quality. The Environment Act 1995 made local authorities responsible for assessing air quality in their area. If air quality in any area of the city is not good enough, the authority must declare this an air quality management area (AQMA) and prepare an Action Plan to improve the air quality. In 2009 the whole of Coventry was declared as an AQMA because of its high levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and therefore it was required to produce an Action Plan to tackle emissions generated by traffic as the main contributor to poor air quality. In 2015 the city was still experiencing high levels of nitrogen dioxide.
- 1.4 In the light of the above concerns, in May of this year work commenced on a review of bus lanes and an assessment was started to study the impact of the suspension of, and possible removal of bus lanes in the city, on congestion and air quality. Furthermore, the Traffic Management Act 2004 requires the Council to manage its road network to ensure the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network. The Council has a statutory duty to review the operation of its network, including bus lanes, to minimize congestion and its consequences.
- 1.5 In Coventry there are 22 bus lanes totalling 8 km in length and 11 bus priority signals. The current list of all bus lanes are detailed further in map format in Appendix A and as a list in Appendix B, with the bus priority signals detailed in Appendix E. In addition there are 7 bus gates in total, detailed in Appendix D.
- 1.6 It is proposed to focus this review on the bus lanes. Bus gates have been installed for a wide variety of reasons, but the main reason is 'environmental'. For example to restrict general traffic to prevent rat-running through residential or shopping areas (e.g. Stoney Road and Far Gosford St), but where there is still a need to maintain bus access.
- 1.7 Prior to the commencement of this review some 1.1 km of bus lanes have previously been removed in the city as they had already been identified as not providing the benefit to bus journey time as originally anticipated. These are listed in Appendix C of this report.
- 1.8 A group of members and officers visited Liverpool City Council to meet with the cabinet member and their senior officer who led on the removal of 22 of their 26 bus lanes in 2013, to learn from their experience of this. Discussions have also taken place with the bus operators delivering services in Coventry and officers have also been liaising with colleagues from Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) regarding the trial suspension.

- 1.9 The outcome of the site visit, and the discussions with TfWM and the bus operators is a recommendation to carry out an evidenced based, phased trial suspension and possible removal of Coventry's bus lanes. It is proposed to carry out this trial in 4 phases with approximately 25% of the current bus lane network (totalling over 2 km per phase in length) in each of the phases. The details of the bus lanes to be suspended in Phase 1 of the trial suspension are included in Appendix G (plan format) and H (written list).
- 1.10 Bus lanes currently generate in the region of £124k per annum. The first phase of the trial will not incur any loss of income, however when future phases proceed there will be a potential loss of income of approximately up to £124k per annum.
- 1.11 There are costs associated with implementing the trial suspensions. These are estimated at approximately £150k for phase 1 and include costs for physical works e.g. removal of existing signage, new signs to be installed, removal of bus lane lining, temporary traffic management costs whilst works are being undertaken and improvements to traffic signals. Officers will also undertake traffic modelling on the impact of key bus lane locations and the acquisition of journey time data for before and during the trials to enable an analysis of the change in journey times. This data will be bought from a traffic company that collects data from satnav and GPS data. The bus operators will provide similar data for their vehicles along with punctuality data. The additional 3 phases of the suspensions will also incur additional expenditure, the indicative costs of this are estimated at £300k (£100k per phase).
- 1.12 Many of the current bus lanes were introduced as part of Centro's Primelines Project during the early 2000's. The aim of Primelines was to speed up bus journey time and to improve journey time reliability. However, with the growth of the city and changes in trip making behaviour it is appropriate to review measures introduced 15 years ago to ensure they are still fit for purposes. Officers are checking with the Department for Transport that there will be no liability for grant claw back.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 **Preferred Option** - The City Council approves the trial suspension of bus lanes on a phased approach with phase 1 covering approximately 25% of the existing bus lane network.
- 2.2 This involves the advertising of an experimental traffic regulation order (ETRO) which will describe the bus lanes to be suspended followed by a period of 7 clear days before the order can take effect.
- 2.3 Whilst the existing traffic regulation orders associated with the bus lanes will remain in place, although temporarily suspended by the ETRO, some physical works will be required to ensure that motorists know that the bus lanes can be used during the suspension. This will involve the bus lane signage being removed and the bus lane road markings will also be removed. Signs advising motorists to use the bus lanes will be installed. This should ensure that the results of the trial will be valid and encourage motorists to use the suspended bus lane.
- 2.4 With an ETRO, objections may be lodged within the first 6 months regarding the suspension. It also provides the opportunity for the Council to make changes to traffic signals such as the use of selective vehicle detection at key traffic signal junctions which will provide late running buses priority at these locations. During the first 6 months monitoring of journey times will be undertaken.

- 2.5 During the trial suspension the journey time data for buses including reliability along with journey time data for all other vehicles will be collected and monitored. This will include journey times for the morning and evening peaks, the interpeaks (i.e. the time between morning and evening) and journey times for Saturday and Sundays. Data for 2015 for the same time periods is also being obtained so that changes in journey time can be monitored and analysed and will be valid comparisons.
- 2.6 The maximum duration of an ETRO is eighteen months, however after the first 6 months of this trial, the results including all the journey time data for before and after the suspension will be reported back to the Cabinet Member for City Services. This will enable an evidence based decision to be made on whether to make the ETRO permanent or to re-instate the bus lane either in part or as a whole. During this decision making process it is proposed that the bus lanes will remain suspended.
- 2.7 If during the first 6 month period any objections are received, a report will need to be submitted to the Cabinet Member for Public Services listing the details of any objections and the officer recommendations in respect of each one; the objectors would be invited to this meeting. The Cabinet Member will make the decision on whether the objections are upheld, not upheld or a variation to the original ETRO is required and a new variation to the ETRO will need to be advertised. Should the latter be required this will start the 6 month objection period again.
- 2.8 If an objection were received from a bus operator within the 6 month objection period and such objection puts an adequate argument forward to claim that the ETRO has the effect of prohibiting or restricting the passage of local bus services along a road, the Council will be required to hold a public inquiry.
- 2.9 If any objections to an ETRO have been made there then follows a 6 week “call in “ period following the cabinet member decision where any objector can appeal to the High Court if they are unhappy with the decision made by the Cabinet Member. Such an appeal can only be made on a point of law.
- 2.10 **Other options** – The City Council could suspend a greater percentage of the bus lane network. However, this is not the recommended option as one of the learning points from the Liverpool experience was the need for collaborative working with all key stakeholders, particularly the bus operators. In Liverpool, the difficulties of suspending all of the bus lanes in one go resulted in a 15 month delay before the trial could start.
- 2.11 Alternatively the City Council could do nothing. However, given the duty to ensure the expeditious movement of traffic under the Traffic Management Act and the need to address air quality issues doing nothing is not really an option.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 Preliminary discussions have taken place with Transport for West Midlands (formerly Centro) and representatives from the bus operators delivering bus services in Coventry. The list of the proposed bus lanes to be suspended as part of phase 1 of the trial has been developed with both TfWM and the bus operators.
- 3.2 As part of the governance arrangements for the trial a project steering group is proposed which will include representatives from all key stakeholder groups.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 Subject to the recommendations being approved, implementation of the first phase trial bus lane suspension will commence in January 2017.

5. Comments from Executive Director of Resources

5.1 Financial implications

The capital cost of introducing the Phase 1 trial bus lanes suspension, estimated to be £150k will need to be funded from the Transportation and Highways Maintenance Capital Programme 2016/17. This will require the current year's programme to be reviewed to establish which projects will require deferring to a future years programme.

Further indicative capital costs, at this stage estimated at an additional £300k ((£100k per phase) will need to be funded from within existing capital resources for the remaining three phases of the trial suspension.

There will be no loss of income from the suspension of the bus lane in phase one of the project, however in future phases a loss of up to £124k is estimated. This will need to be funded from other bus lane and bus gate enforcement income. The financial pressure that this loss of income will create for the directorates' budgetary control bottom line position will be closely monitored.

5.2 Legal implications

The recommendations in this report and all subsequent actions can be undertaken using the Council's statutory powers as the Highway Authority. The Council has a statutory obligation under the Traffic Management Act 2004 (Section 16(1)), and specifically through the Network Management Duty that is placed upon it to ensure the following objectives:

- (a) Securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network; and,
- (b) Facilitating the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority.

The Council also has an obligation under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to balance those matters against the effect on local amenity, air quality and access together with the passage of public service vehicles.

If, as mentioned in the body of the report, a bus company objects to the ETRO and such objections require the Council to hold a Public Inquiry, this would have high cost and resource implications.

The Council has a duty under section 82 of the Environment Act 1995 to keep air quality within their area under review.

6. Other implications

- 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)?**

This scheme contributes to the Council's core aims of:

- A prosperous Coventry, by adding more capacity to its transport network and therefore enabling more growth to take place and businesses to improve efficiency.
- Making places and services easily accessible, by improving the efficiency of the transport network for multiple modes of transport.
- Improving the environment and tackling climate change, by reducing the overall amount of delay on the transport network. The trial suspension of bus lanes should lead to an improvement in traffic flows and relieve congestion along some of the city's key transport routes. A reduction in congestion levels, and the free flow of traffic on the City's highway network, can only have a positive impact on air quality.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

There is a governance structure in place for the review of bus lanes whereby the risks are managed at project team level and reported to project board.

There is a risk that objections could be received to the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order. The trial basis for the suspension of bus lanes might lead to some adverse publicity. In order to minimise these risks, an evidence based approach is proposed to support the recommendations to the Cabinet Member for City Services following the trial suspensions. The proposed approach will enable the Council to gain an evidence based understanding of the effectiveness of the existing bus lanes and the potential impact their removal or retention will have on the Council's highway network.

The bus lanes were introduced as part of Centro's Primelines project around 2004/2005. The project was funded through the Secretary of State for Transport under section 56 of the Transport Act 1968. One of the conditions attached to the provision of this grant was that should any part of the works be removed for a period of more than 6 weeks following the completion of the scheme, then the Secretary of State must be notified in writing of our intention to remove some, or all of the works funded by the section 56 grant. Officers are checking with the Department for Transport that we will not be liable for claw back.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

None

6.4 Equalities / EIA

No equality impact assessments have been undertaken. However, it is not expected that implementation of this trial will have any adverse impact.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

The (anticipated) reduced levels of congestion along particular routes should result in improvements to air quality.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

It is recognised that the bus operators providing bus services in Coventry will be impacted by the trial bus lane suspension. To ensure the bus operators are involved during the trial suspension it is proposed that they have representatives on the steering group and a named representative on the project board.

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This report is published on the council's website: www.coventry.gov.uk/councilmeetings

Appendix A – Current Bus Lanes in Coventry



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Appendix B: List of all bus lanes.

Coventry Bus Lane Lengths 2016	
Road/Area	Length (m)
Ansty Road	130
Ansty Road/Walsgrave Road	332
Binley Road	885
Binley Road/Sky Blue Way	629
Butts Road	276
Clifford Bridge Road	138
Foleshill Rd/Longford Rd (inbound)	1,590
Foleshill Rd/Longford Rd (outbound)	587
Hearsall Common	350
Herald Avenue	389
Holbrook Lane	50
Kirby Corner Road	190
Lockhurst Lane	130
London Road	332
Radford Road	190
Stoney Road	104
Stoney Stanton Rd (inbound)	801
Stoney Stanton Rd (outbound)	182
Swanswell Street	120
Tile Hill Lane	475
Walsgrave Road	15
Whitley Interchange	230
Total Length of Bus Lanes (m)	7,995

Appendix C: Removed Bus Lanes

Road/Area	Direction	Length (m)
Butts Road (A4053 Ring Road to Albany Road)	Outbound	195
Croft Road (Corporation Street to A4053 Ring Road)	Outbound	130
Hearsall Common	Inbound	100
London Road (Chace Avenue to St James Lane)	Outbound	150
Sir Henry Parkes Road (Charter Avenue to Fletchamstead Highway)	Inbound	255
Tower Street (From Bishop Street 40m east)	Outbound	40
Upper Well Street (A4053 Ring Road to Corporation Street)	Inbound	240
Total Length of Bus Lanes Removed (m)		1,110

Appendix D: Operational Bus Gates

Gosford St (near A444 Junction)
Park Road (at Quinton Rd Junction)
Pool Meadow (at Bus station)
Station Square (temporary)
Warwick Road (at Greyfriars Road Junction)
White Street (at A4053 Ring Rd Junction)
Whittle Arch (between Hales St and Trinity St)

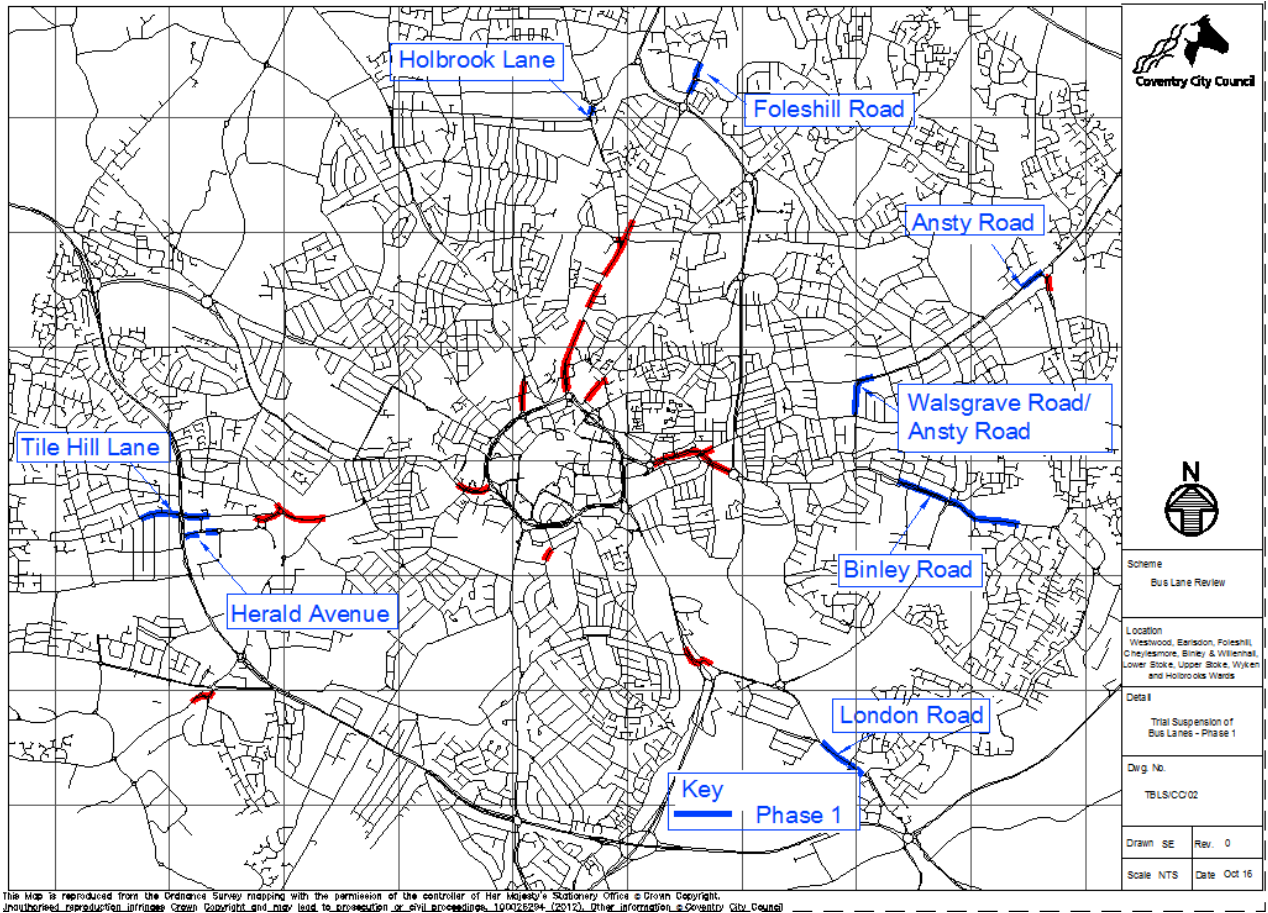
Appendix E: Bus Priority Signals

Clifford Bridge Rd (at Hospital entrance)
Daventry Road/Whitley Interchange
Foleshill Road (near Ambulance Station)
Foleshill Road (near Edmund St)
Kirby Corner Road
Longford Rd (at Arena Park entrance)
Quinton Road/Park Road junction
Radford Road (near A4053 junction)
Stoney Stanton Rd (at Swanswell junction)

Appendix F: Removed Bus Priority signals

Gosford Street (outside University)
Hearsall Common (near Canley Road)
Sir Henry Parkes Road

Appendix G: Phase 1 Trial Bus Lane Suspension



Appendix H: List of bus lanes for trial suspension

Bus Lanes to be Removed/Suspended			
Road/Area	Length (m)	No of Signals Affected	Comments
Ansty Road outbound at Clifford Bridge Road	115	1	Bus lane shortened during A4600 Pinchpoint Works
Ansty Rd inbound at Burns Rd	332	2	
Binley Road	885	4	
Foleshill Road/Old Church Road (inbound 95m and outbound 125m)	220	1	
Holbrook Lane outbound	50	0	
London Road outbound St James Lane	240	1	
Tile Hill Gyratory	695	4	212m Herald Avenue outbound and 483m Tile Hill Lane inbound
	2,537	13	