

**Report to:** EXECUTIVE MEMBER ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES **Item:**

**Date:** 15th March 2006

**Report of:** DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

**Contact Officer:** Anthony Watts **Report No.**

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**TITLE OF REPORT:**

**CHURCHGATE CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES**

**NON-CONFIDENTIAL**

This report does **not** contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the Press or Members of the public

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Executive Member Environmental Services is recommended to:-

- (i) Approve the highway proposals to create a new pedestrian area in Churchgate shown on plan number 284025/101 which would include.
- Adopting a revised proposal to allow one way traffic to access Churchgate (east to west); and
  - Removing car parking from Churchgate but retaining car parking facilities in Churchbank.

**DECISION:**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Leader/Executive Member Monitoring Officer

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out in relation to this proposal and it has been concluded that there is no adverse differential impact on any particular social group.



## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The Churchgate pedestrian scheme has been designed as part of the approved Town Centre Transport Strategy and is aimed at increasing access and enjoyment of the Town Centre by pedestrians. The Transport Strategy has been the subject of several consultation events including displays at the street fair in Churchgate in June 2005.

More detailed designs have now been developed. Businesses were consulted about the proposed layout, loading arrangements, and the possible closure of Churchgate to traffic between 10.30am and 4.30pm. This consultation took place in November/December 2005 and it became clear that there was some opposition to the plan although there was only a 36% return of the questionnaire forms.

Following a drop in/public meeting event arranged on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2006 peoples' views were recorded. A second consultation was arranged that included two options for the proposed pedestrian scheme, the original proposal, together with a further option developed as an outcome from the feedback received at the earlier drop in/public meeting. This was also aimed at increasing the consultation response rate.

The second option, to carry out the street work but leave the carriageway open to one way traffic found considerably more support. It is therefore recommended that this second option be approved as a compromise.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Bolton Town Centre Action Framework.  
Bolton Town Centre Transport Strategy.

## **BACKGROUND**

- 1 The Churchgate pedestrian scheme has been designed as part of the Town Centre Transport Strategy to extend the pedestrian areas of the town centre and thereby improve access and enjoyment of the Town Centre and secondly to contribute to the delivery of the Action Framework proposal to revitalise this historic area of the town centre.
- 2 The proposal is designed to reduce the amount of on street parking, and traffic movements resulting from drivers circulating and looking for on street parking spaces. The Churchgate project, which is part of the Town Centre Transport Strategy has been the subject of several consultation events including displays at the street fair in Churchgate in June 2005. Among partner organisations consulted are the Town Centre Company, GMTU, the Taxi Association, the Cycle Forum, the Chamber of Commerce, Bus Operators. The Churchgate area also forms part of a major pedestrian route from the Castle Street Area to the east of the town centre, via the underpass beneath St Peters Way and has been identified in the strategy as an area to be included in the extension of town centre pedestrian facilities.
- 3 Local businesses in Churchgate were consulted about the proposed layout, loading arrangements, and the possible closure, to vehicular traffic of Churchgate between 10.30am and 4.30pm. This consultation took place in November/December 2005 and it became clear that there was significant opposition to the plan.

## **ORIGINAL PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY PROPOSALS**

- 4 The Churchgate Project has been the subject of consultation as part of the work done in developing the Town Centre Action Framework and the Town Centre Transport Strategy and as such has been given wide coverage in the Bolton Evening news over several months in 2005. The original Churchgate consultation publicity exercise suggested that:
  - a pedestrian area be created in Churchgate and extend to the St Peters Way underpass;
  - delivery vehicles would be allowed into Churchgate before 10.30am and after 4.30pm and that they would have to travel one way, east to west. (as is the existing arrangement);
  - the layout would provide daytime loading bays which could be used in the evening as a taxi rank;
  - the public space created would be available for street fairs, events, and exhibitions;
  - permits would be issued to drivers visiting or working at premises in Churchgate to allow access to rear and underground car parking areas; and

- on street parking would be removed.
- 5 The consultation exercise about this original proposal resulted in only a 36% return. In addition it became clear that in one instance several forms had been returned on behalf of a number of businesses but filled in by the same person and expressing the same views on each form.
  - 6 A second consultation exercise was organised for the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2006. Representatives of local businesses, Councillors from the Halliwell, Crompton and Great Lever Wards were invited. The Evening News announced that it was a public meeting so some members of the public also attended. The event was a drop in /public meeting at the Friends Meeting House which resulted in a lively debate from 3pm to almost 7pm. A list of views expressed is contained in appendix 1 to this report. However, the main thrust of the views were that people were concerned about:
    - the removal of on street parking especially for people with disabilities)
    - the potential loss of passing trade;
    - Day time loading restrictions
    - The existing drinking culture and anti-social behaviour being exacerbated;
    - Creating on street drinking/café areas; and access to existing car parks behind to the north side of Churchgate.
  - 7 One concern of local traders is that there is a lot of passing trade which arrives by car and these people park in Churchgate and so removing parking spaces would have a detrimental effect on trade. Car parking in Churchgate is subject to pay and display ticket control so there will be some people who park in Churchgate and pass local shops. Traders say that most people parking in Churchgate are usually on their way to somewhere else in the town centre to visit or shop. This means there is some footfall created in this way but not all of these visitors will be visiting shops in Churchgate. In addition it was accepted that because a number of people will arrive when the spaces in Churchgate are already full, a good number of motorists who are making a visit for a short time will often take the risk of not paying the parking charges or will stop on the double yellow lines
  - 8 Concern about facilities for people with disabilities mainly centred around employees working at the Inland Revenue and/or the Health Authority. These employees take up these spaces for a good part of the day and the point was made that their employers ought to be making some provision rather than relying on the on street parking bays (which would be free to “blue badge” holders).
  - 9 Loading and unloading was the main issue especially for businesses such as the Ye Old Pastie Shoppe and Booth’s Music Shop who rely

on deliveries arriving through out the day. Whilst this was a similar issue in the Hotel Street area, for the most part pedestrianisation did not create too many problems. However, the businesses in Churchgate do tend to be smaller local establishments who have to rely on deliveries which can arrive at any time of the day.

## **SECOND OPTION**

10 In view of the concerns expressed by the local businesses and traders a review of the proposal was carried out and it was felt that the physical layout of the scheme could be built as originally proposed but with some amendments, including:

- the removal of the on street car parking so as to maintain the integrity of the pedestrian area and allow for wider footways as well as a pedestrian/seating area but with car parking being retained in Churchbank to allow some local parking especially for people with disabilities.
- The proposed closure of the area to vehicular traffic between 10.30am and 4.30pm could be abandoned without too much detriment to the scheme.

11 A decision was taken to consult again on both the original proposal and the revised plan. This was to ensure that those who did not respond in the first place had a chance to make their views known and to offer those who did object to the original proposal to consider the proposed alternative.

12 The questionnaires were issued at the beginning of February to be returned on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 2006. The result was an improved return of 48% with a six to one majority in favour of the revised proposal. It is accepted that this does not mean that these correspondents are completely happy with the proposals (especially removal of some parking) but this is seen as a reasonable compromise.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

13 The revised scheme will require the introduction of new traffic regulation orders because it will be necessary to promote parking and loading restrictions in the form of double yellow lines in Churchgate. This will be to the detriment of the appearance of the conservation area but this compromise is the only way of ensuring the exclusion of parking from the area.

Subject to approval of the scheme some physical works can start in March, however, the traffic orders may delay the completion of the scheme until December 2006.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 15 The Executive Member Environmental Services is recommended to approve the highway proposals to create a new pedestrian area in Churchgate shown on plan number 284025/101 which will include.
- a. Adopting a revised proposal to allow one way traffic to access Churchgate (east to west); and
  - b. Removing car parking from Churchgate but retaining car parking facilities in Churchbank.

**HM/AJW**

**24th January 2006**

## **APPENDIX 1**

# **Churchgate Consultation Event 10th January 2006**

The following are a list of comments made at the meeting and are personal views of the person concerned. There was no tests taken as to whether these were generally supported views. It was felt that reasonable steps should be taken to respond where possible and/or practical in the design of the Churchgate scheme.

### **General comments made at the event**

Project would lead to an increase in on street drinking, violence and general anti social behaviour inevitable due to waiting at taxi spaces

European style "on street" activity is a backwards move

Can't cross Bradshawgate (pedestrians)

Generally against removing parking on Church Bank

Disabled spaces (3 spaces) only used by full time staff with blue badges

Loading arrangements; some properties with no rear access Deliveries that cannot be coordinated into time zones i.e Pastie Shop delivery of Potatoes from Lincoln regularly throughout the day

Access for employees working flexible hours/part time

Pedestrian safety in Subway is an urgent issue to be addressed

Church bank not a busy pedestrian route

Vacant premises in town centre. Proposal would lead to more.

Old Man and Scythe receives deliveries on opposite side of road wants to keep this arrangement

Against planters/pots used as public toilet

On Street events when, what days, what sort of events?

How to access premises when events on (no rear access for some)

No CCTV Underpass, Churchgate/Bank, Silverwell Street, Princess Street

Existing Taxi rank only used Thursday, Friday and Saturday for one hour after last orders

Prevent Taxi U turns on Bradshawgate

Against providing a barrier at the Swan end of Churchgate

Access needed to Church for services especially weddings and funerals.

Against removing parking in Silverwell Street

Business owners what will they gain?

There will be no new shoppers if pedestrianisation goes ahead

Trade from passing traffic will be lost

Some asked where are the alleged passing traffic coming from?

Council plans activity is dominated by big business no attention/investment given to small businesses

Out of Town shopping M&S at Middlebrook will kill the town centre

Town Centre developers don't contribute to traffic schemes/physical improvements

People parking at Churchgate don't use Churchgate they are going elsewhere

Turnover of parking bays some claim it is high, some claim too low

17 visits a day from Traffic Wardens is too much

Scheme will make Parish Church end a dead end and encourage loitering

Introduce substantial parking (multi storey) at Church Wharf access from Brown Street (at top layer?)

Silverwell Street missed off initial consultation

Want double yellow lines removing from turning head on Churchbank

Knock on effect of traffic using Deansgate; McDonalds corner Side of Market Hall Front of Whittakers will all be busier

Princess St will be new rat run

Tax Office note; can only load at frontage

Councillor Sylvester would like to see cycle parking included

Councillor Sherrington would like to keep parking to Churchbank