

COMMITTEE **Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure**

DATE **20 April 2010**

DIRECTOR **Gordon McIntosh**

TITLE OF REPORT **College Bounds Traffic Management Proposals**

REPORT NUMBER **EPI/10/091**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is to advise Committee of the results of a consultation exercise undertaken with the residents and businesses of High Street with regard to restricted access arrangements to High Street via College Bounds.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

1. Approve the progression of the installation of a bus lane camera following decriminalisation of bus lane enforcement in Aberdeen City subject to available funding.
2. Instruct the appropriate officials to commence the necessary legal procedures of preliminary statutory consultation for the traffic regulation orders required as described in this report.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No budget provision has been made to date to fund any measure approved for the College Bounds / University Road junction. It is estimated that for the preferred solution, Option 4 (camera enforcement), to supply, install, commission and bring to service an unmanned camera enforcement solution with an adjacent cabinet containing the monitoring equipment, router and firewall, plus the installation of the evidential record and control unit with a review station at an appropriate office would be £70,000. This cost assumes provision of the power source and communication line by the Council which are assumed to be in place as these are used for the traffic signals.

Currently there is no budget allocation for the proposed measures and this will have to be considered in the future as the traffic order progresses.

It should be noted that there will be an income stream associated with the implementation of an enforcement camera following the decriminalisation of bus lane enforcement. A summary of costs, based upon figures contained within the Detailed Business Case for the Civil Enforcement of Bus Lanes for a proposed camera at College Bounds / University Road is outlined in the tables in Appendix A.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

It also meets with the local Community Plan objectives to continually improve road safety and maximise accessibility for pedestrians and all modes of transport.

The proposals are in line with the Councils Transportation Strategy to improve safety for all road users by continuing to reduce the number of casualties in traffic collisions.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There is a risk that any approved traffic regulation orders may have to re-enter the legislative process if they are unable to be implemented within the statutory implementation time of 2 years from the start of public consultation if funding is insufficient.

6. REPORT

6.1 A report to the former Central Area Committee on 27 May 2009 outlines the possible options for access control at College Bounds / University Road and officers were instructed to undertake a consultation exercise with local residents, local businesses and Old Aberdeen Community Council outlining the various options and to report back to a future committee. The possible options consulted upon and their various implications are detailed below:

1. Status Quo;
2. Complete Vehicular Ban;
3. Installation of a Rising Bollard System;
4. Installation of a Camera Enforcement System.

Status Quo

The status quo would, of course, result in the continual use of College Bounds by prohibited traffic. In order to reduce the number of vehicles passing through the junction regular visible enforcement is required from Grampian Police at a level which they are unable to sustain. Occasional purges may be undertaken by Grampian Police; however, experience has shown that, whilst short bursts of enforcement reduce the numbers of vehicles transgressing the existing restrictions, in the longer term there is very little effect.

Complete Vehicular Ban

The implementation of a complete vehicular ban would necessitate the removal of the existing traffic signals at the College Bounds / University Road junction and the installation of four to six static bollards across the carriageway. A

complete ban would necessitate a re-routing of the First Bus's No. 20 service and alternative access arrangements for tourist buses and delivery vehicles bound for the business premises on High Street.

Installation of Rising Bollard System

The intention of a rising bollard system would be to provide access for permitted vehicles only e.g. buses whilst preventing general traffic from accessing High Street from College Bounds. A rising bollard system would consist of a pair of hydraulically operated rising bollards placed in the centre of the carriageway of College Bounds and a pair of static bollards on either side to prevent passage of unauthorized vehicles. In order to allow the bollards to operate, magnetic loops would be placed underneath the road surface on either side of the bollard. Vehicles permitted to access High Street would require to be fitted with a chassis or windscreen mounted tag which would cause the bollards to be lowered when the vehicle passes over the carriageway loops. The bollards would then rise again once the vehicle has safely passed.

Again, as with option 2 above, this option would result in the need for alternative access arrangements for tour buses and delivery vehicles to be found. The responses received from businesses located on High Street have indicated that large delivery vehicles require access via College Bounds as some of these vehicles cannot negotiate the left turn manoeuvre from Meston Walk into College Bounds safely.

Installation of Camera Enforcement System

An option exists to alter the legislation at College Bounds to be comparable to a bus lane to allow camera enforcement to be used. The provision of camera enforcement would allow automated enforcement whilst still providing limited access for permitted vehicles such as service buses, tour buses and delivery vehicles.

A table indicating the pros and cons associated with each option is contained within the appendices to this report.

- 6.2 A consultation exercise was carried out initially with the business premises located on High Street during late 2009 and then followed in February and early March 2010 by a letter drop and reply form upon which residents and businesses were asked to indicate which of the four options they preferred and to provide comments. From the initial consultation exercise with the business premises located on High Street it has been determined that there are particular vehicle types which cannot access High Street via Elphinstone Road and Meston Walk due to their size and the tight turns which these vehicles must attempt to negotiate. The businesses have made it clear that the prevention of access to High Street via College Bounds would result in severe disruption to their operation and therefore the camera option or the status quo would be the most suitable options.
- 6.3 With regard to the consultation undertaken with the residential properties in the area, the 124 letters issued generated a total of 32 responses. It should be noted that three respondents selected more than one possible option. The preferred options are tabulated below:

Option	1. Status Quo	2. Complete Vehicular Ban	3. Rising Bollard System	4. Camera Enforcement
No of Responses	4	6	4	21

A summary of the comments received in addition to the option choices is contained in the appendices to this report.

6.4 Old Aberdeen Community Council's response commented on all possible options outlined in the consultation letter, and also tabled a fifth possible option for consideration. The comments received from the Community Council and officers' comments on the fifth option are tabulated in Appendix D.

6.5 The majority of respondents wished to see a camera enforcement system in place which would allow access to High Street via College Bounds for buses and approved delivery vehicles that could be actively enforced.

6.6 **Further Consultee Comments**

Enterprise Planning & Infrastructure Committee

Convener: Councillor Kate Dean has been consulted;

Vice Convener: Councillor Callum McCaig has been consulted;

Other Elected Members

Councillor Norman Collie has been consulted;

Councillor Jim Noble has been consulted;

Councillor Richard Robertson has been consulted;

Key Responsibility – Transport & Environment

Lead Councillor: Councillor Ron Clark has been consulted;

Other Consultees

Susan Cooper, City Chamberlain, has been consulted and has no additional comments as the recommendations clearly outline that progression is subject to available funding;

Jane MacEachran, City Solicitor, has been consulted;

Gordon McIntosh, Director of Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure, has been consulted;

Ciaran Monaghan, Head of Service – Office of Chief Executive has been consulted;

Hugh Murdoch, Head of Service – Shelter & Environment, has been consulted;

Mike Cheyne, Roads Manager, has been consulted;

Margaret Bochel, Head of Planning and Infrastructure, has been consulted and is in agreement with the content of the report;

Louise Scott, Marketing and Events Manager, has been consulted;

Neil Carnegie, Community Safety Manager, has been consulted;

Elaine Hourston, Account Manager, has been consulted.

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

APPENDIX A

Summary of Costs from Detailed Business Case for Civil Enforcement of Bus Lanes

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
New Digital Equipment	£70,000	£0	£0
Equipment Maintenance	£3,664	£3,847	£4,039
Penalty Rate	£60	£80	£80
Offences / Month	50	10	10
Offences / Year	450*	120	120
Gross Revenue	£27,000	£9,600	£9,600
Non-Payment	£270	£100	£100
Legal Costs	£6,055	£1,615	£1,615
Net Revenue	-£52,989	£4,038	£3,826

* Year 1 revenue is based on a 9 month period, as offences could potentially take 3 months to process, thereby they would not be included in Year 1 revenue and this follows for subsequent years.

** Staff costs and consumables have not been incorporated into these costs for the single camera unit. It is has been assumed that no additional staff time and consumables would be associated with including an additional camera unit alongside the existing 8 units in the city.

APPENDIX B

The table below outlines the pros and cons associated with each of the options consulted upon.

Option	Pros	Cons
<u>Option 1</u> Status Quo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional obtrusive street furniture; • No disruption to tourist coaches, service buses or delivery vehicles; • Removal of existing traffic signals could be considered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of continual enforcement; • No reduction in traffic transgressing existing restriction;
<u>Option 2</u> Complete Vehicular Ban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic order enforced by physical barrier preventing vehicles entering restricted area; • No requirement for Police enforcement; • Existing traffic signals removed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-routing of No 20 bus service required; • Re-routing of tourist coaches required; • Re-routing of delivery vehicles required; • Additional street furniture and signage required on all approaches.
<u>Option 3</u> Rising Bollard System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows access through restricted area for service buses; • No requirement for Police enforcement; • Existing traffic signals removed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to accommodate tourist coaches and delivery vehicles; • Additional street furniture and signage required on all approaches; • CCTV monitoring desirable to ensure operational integrity and diagnose faults; • Failure of bollards in the “up” position would result in delays and detours for public transport vehicles; • Tailgating vehicles could result in accidents causing damage to the road surface and equipment and also injuries to motorists. • Loop detection not reliable beneath cobbled road surfaces.
<u>Option 4</u> Camera Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows access through restricted area for authorised vehicles (service buses, tourist coaches, delivery vehicles, emergency services etc); • No requirement for Police enforcement; • Existing traffic signals removed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional street furniture and signage required on all approaches;

APPENDIX C – Comments Received From Consultees

<u>Selected Option</u>	<u>Comments</u>
4	Difficult to agree with the suggestion that tour buses and larger delivery vehicles require access from College Bounds as other larger vehicles appear to be able to negotiate the turn from Meston Walk to High Street successfully. The many vehicles approaching High Street from College Bounds present a danger to pedestrians and vehicles entering High Street from Meston Walk sometimes take less care than necessary as the assumption is that there will be no vehicles coming from College Bounds. A number of vehicles travel against the one-way restriction on Meston Walk and Elphinstone Road.
4	Don't see any reason why northbound traffic is prohibited for residents. Additional detour via King St & St. Machar Drive and Elphinstone Rd and Meston Walk (which are in an appalling condition) is a considerable waste of time and petrol. If a camera system is installed, would like to see residents issued with permits to allow access.
2	Bus route 20 is outdated as the University have sold Marischal College. There is no need for tourist coaches to access High Street as they can easily access and park on Elphinstone Road.
1	Bought a shop on High Street but have not opened due to bad access. This is a public highway which should have one way traffic with no restricted access. The University has ample space to provide parking on High Street and The Chanonry but chooses to do nothing. The University have 4 sites unoccupied on High Street.
4	Option 4 appears the least intrusive solution; however the status of taxis is to be called into question. It is difficult to call a taxi as they cannot access High Street.
4	Business deliveries render options 2 and 3 unworkable.
2	Complete vehicular ban is necessary because residents of College Bounds suffer from excessive noise due to the cobbled road surface. Excessive traffic on College Bounds is ruining the cobbled street. Cars can easily use King Street, there is no need to access College Bounds except for access. The 20mph speed limit is currently ignored.
2	There should be a site visit with regard to waste disposal vehicles and delivery vehicles not being able to access via Meston Walk. Have seen this happen in the past. As the Council own many vehicles of this size this manoeuvre could be tested rather than just listening to the businesses. Double yellow lines should be implemented opposite this junction.
4	The consultation with businesses indicates that options 2 and 3 are not really options. Option 1 has failed for decades. Option 4 must be attempted and will only work if there are penalties incurred by those detected on camera.
4	This is the only option which would satisfy businesses and residents. On no account should the No. 20 bus be re-routed.
4	<u>Comments from Grampian Police</u> The favoured option from a Police perspective is option 4 as this will be self enforcing. This will tie in naturally with the ongoing decriminalisation of bus lanes in the city.
3 or 4	<u>Comments from First Aberdeen</u> First supports restriction of unauthorised vehicles and would be satisfied with either option 3 or 4. Do not support any option requiring a re-routing of service 20.

4	Option 4 is the best but cameras must be associated with very clear and unambiguous signage. Access to 53 College Bounds must be available from College Bounds. This can either be achieved both by turning south from Meston Walk into College Bounds or by travelling north up College Bounds.
4	As a resident, suggests that residents be included as authorised vehicles as they have a strong interest in observing speed limits. From a pedestrian safety point of view the No. 20 bus should be re-routed. Bollards could be placed at the Town House which would reduce through traffic but allow unauthorised access.
4	Possible amalgamation of proposals but it is believed that the existing signage and traffic lights cause confusion. The road signs are overhung by trees and not visible enough. A standard no entry sign would be better. The traffic lights give the indication to motorists that access is OK as they show green when a vehicle approaches. See no reason why a rising bollard could not work here but do accept it could prevent legal access. Taking away some of the street furniture to erect a camera would be better but the whole traffic use in the area needs to be thought through.
4	One important issue which has not been addressed is that of vehicles not respecting the 20mph speed limit, especially bus drivers. The noise and disruption caused to residents of College Bounds is high.
4	It would be a pity to re-route the bus as No 20 is the quickest route into the city. Option 4 is the least obtrusive.
2	This option is the only way to stop illegal rat run traffic entering High Street. It will still be possible for delivery vehicles to enter from the correct access. As a long term resident I am fed up of the large numbers of cars, vans and lorries taking illegal short cuts on their way to Bridge of Don.
1	The status quo of the Police not attempting to enforce strictly the "No Access Except Buses" policy is currently working well so far as traffic level is concerned both on College Bounds and High Street itself. Fully supportive of the interests of businesses in High Street in terms of access. Old Aberdeen needs it's businesses as it is already a less vibrant centre than it was or should be. Ideally, access to High Street from College Bounds should not be restricted so as to divide Old Aberdeen into two halves. Consideration might be given to making College Bounds / High Street a "No Through Road" with some camera enforcement system at the Town House and junction with St. Machar Drive.
3	<u>Comments from University of Aberdeen</u> Option 1 isn't really an option as there is a clearly identified problem with vehicles dangerously ignoring the current road layout. Option 2 would be an almost certain solution but would cause serious disruption to the No. 20 bus route. It would also slow and restrict emergency service vehicles. Option 3, although not ideal, does balance the need for access with a physical restriction to prevent unauthorised access. It is appreciated that loop detection through cobbled surfaces can be problematic but has been overcome in many situations by installing a speed cushion before the bollards. This serves to both slow vehicles before the hazard preventing bollard jumping and allows the loop to be installed within the cushion. Tourist vehicles and delivery vehicles can turn left up High Street, to suggest otherwise is unreasonable. With regard to option 4, no mention is made of the fact that the cameras must be monitored and require administrative back office support. With no physical measures, drivers will continue to ignore the restriction. This therefore would be a costly and ineffective system.
1	The considerable costs of options 2-4 plus the resulting inconvenience outweighs the advantages of the status quo. Occasional transgressions of the current prohibition are a small price to pay compared to options 2-4. As a regular user of College Bounds, I see few prohibited vehicles driving through the traffic lights at the Bounds / University Rd junction.

2 or 4	Living in College Bounds we find it impossible to separate the question of access to High Street from the wider question of the use of College Bounds as a rat run. It is recognised that there are serious disadvantages to the 1st preference of option 2 so option 4, camera enforcement, is a fall back which would have a deterrent effect if rigorously monitored.
3 or 4	For quite some years the fact that the bus gate has been created around traffic signals which turn green to any approaching motorist has been challenged. A simple "No Entry" sign may be a more viable option and there are examples of "No Entry Except Buses" signage on Menzies Road and Charlotte Street. Why could this not be adopted here? It is suggested that this is attempted in the first instance at College Bounds. It is not understood why the rising bollard option was offered due to the operational problems described unless there was fresh evidence that this would be a workable solution. Camera enforcement seems to be the best idea only if it is used and enforced. If the traffic lights were removed it does not seem that there would be a large increase in street furniture.
2	Status quo is completely unacceptable. Vehicles drive at speed through College Bounds onto High Street and ignore all signs. Complete ban would be best but rising bollard is next best. Must remove useless traffic lights at all cost. Buses are too large for the road anyway.
4	Delighted that this problem is being further addressed. College Bounds route is almost continuously being used as a short cut, encouraged by the presence of the traffic lights. This builds up after football matches and allows cars to build up considerable momentum so that they hurtle past the houses in High Street. This generates a lot of noise. The 20mph speed limit is ignored and 5mph with better signage. Whatever the outcome of the consultation, something should be done; a complete ban would be preferred to nothing at all.
4	Option 4 most likely to achieve the required ends, the passage of prohibited vehicles through College Bounds in both directions. Have learned over the years to be extremely cautious of vehicles entering Meston Walk from High Street, most of them having illegally entered the system through College Bounds. If this were to be made one way in an easterly direction, thus closing access from High Street, few drivers would choose to hazard an illegal entry through College Bounds. Delivery vehicles do not need to use the section of road in a westerly direction; access to University properties including the rear of Crombie Hall is more easily accessed and safely gained from Elphinstone Road.

APPENDIX D – Comments From Old Aberdeen Community Council

Old Aberdeen Community Council provided comments on all possible options and tabled a fifth alternative option. Officers met with a representative of Old Aberdeen Community Council to discuss the content of the letter and to provide clarification on a number of points. The comments by OACC are summarised below along with roads officers' comments which are in italic font.

Old Aberdeen Community Council Comments

Option 1

Acknowledge that the existing system does not work as the no entry sign is ignored, the traffic signals give conflicting messages and the number of infringements is impossible to police. Suggest that a series of simple measures such as removing traffic signals and replacing the "Pedestrian Zone" signage with "No Entry Except Buses" signage could make a difference.

Comment from Roads Officers

The traffic signals have previously been bagged over and the problem of prohibited traffic passing through was still observed. Replacement of the signage would result in the prohibition of pedal cycles which is undesirable given that National Cycle Route 1 passes through the section in question. Replacement of signage would also mean that enforcement duties remained with Grampian Police who do not have sufficient resources to carry out effective enforcement.

Option 2

Consider that a fixed barrier would be too inflexible and the re-routing of buses would bring about a different set of problems.

Option 3

This option was favoured at the last meeting of the Old Aberdeen Traffic Management Group. OACC recognise the problems of reliability, maintenance and possible vandalism, however this should remain an option as it combines the need for access with the barrier effect of preventing prohibited traffic. OACC understand from the University that there are ways around the loop detection but also recognise that the costs associated with this option are high and it may necessitate the re-scheduling of the No. 20 bus service.

Option 4

If the section of road is to become a bus lane to permit camera enforcement there are a number of issues which OACC are extremely concerned about.

1. This would involve the painting of the words "Bus Lane" on the cobbles and, as this is a Grade 1 Conservation Area, this is not at all desirable.

Comment from Roads Officers

It should be possible to cover the proposed restriction using signage only. Guidance from the Scottish Government would be sought on this matter.

2. This would involve a great deal of road signage in a very short distance in a street of national historical importance.

Comment from Roads Officers

Whilst there would be a requirement for additional signage, the existing traffic signals would be removed.

3. This would give access to taxis and open up a parallel route to King Street. As the intention is to avoid through traffic, this is not acceptable.

Comment from Roads Officers

The traffic order could be written to prohibit taxis from using the route.

4. OACC were unaware that delivery vehicles could use this route. The existing sign does not permit this. To afford access for delivery vehicles apparently required for the High Street is surely opening up the route to any delivery vehicle. How are they distinguished? OACC would contend that the delivery vehicles associated with the newspaper shop, café, bakery and bookshop could negotiate the turn from Meston Walk into College Bounds with no difficulty. The beer delivery lorry may have to negotiate with care.

Comment from Roads Officers

Consultation with the businesses on High Street revealed that a number of large vehicles made deliveries to High Street on a regular basis. The details of any traffic order including the vehicle types which would be permitted passage through the junction would be consulted upon if and when an order is to be promoted.

OACC have concerns over the effective enforcement of and camera installation. For the option to be an effective deterrent there would have to be a permanent camera with infringements rigorously enforced and there are serious concerns that the area would be landed with all the required furniture and signage but with little effect.

Comment from Roads Officers

Following the decriminalisation of bus lane enforcement which, it is hoped, will be approved by the Scottish Government later this year, Aberdeen City Council will assume the role of enforcing bus lanes. The enforcement would be far more rigorous than that carried out at present by Grampian Police and it is proposed to upgrade the equipment over time to digital units.

Option 5

The suggested fifth option involves making College Bounds one way only for southbound traffic i.e. traffic would have access to College Bounds by turning left from University Road with no access from Spital. Buses would still be permitted to travel northbound with "No Entry Except Buses" signage established at the Spital / Orchard Street / Sunnybank Road junction. Signalisation of the junction is also suggested. It is felt by OACC that this option would divert traffic speeding down College Bounds, remove the need for traffic calming measures, improve an unsafe junction for road users and increase pedestrian safety along the length of College Bounds and the junctions at either end.

Comment from Roads Officers

This suggestion would create a contraflow bus lane which would need to be signed accordingly to ensure that southbound vehicles were made suitably aware that they may encounter a bus travelling north. As a result a thick white line down the centre of College Bounds would be required along with additional repeater signage along the length of College Bounds and also at the junctions at Sunnybank Road, Spital Walk and University Road.

It is also felt that if this proposal were to be taken forward, additional work would be required to determine the effect on the King Street / Orchard Street / Linksfield Road signalised junction.

The “No Entry Except Buses” signage also prevents cyclists from using the route, this would result in a need to re-route the National Cycle Route 1 which runs in both directions along College Bounds.