

***Bristol Walking Alliance (BWA) objects to the proposal to remove the prohibition of motor traffic on University Road at its junction with Queens Road due to its adverse effect on pedestrian flow, and that the reasons given do not stand up to scrutiny.***

## **1 Background to the Traffic Regulation Order**

### **1.1 The TRO itself**

Traffic Regulation Order CAE/NMT/P-1262 proposes to remove the permanent prohibition of motor traffic from the section of University Road at its junction with Queens Road.

This prohibition was introduced temporarily in 2020 during COVID precautions and then made permanent through another TRO in 2022 “based on the benefits of uninterrupted pedestrian priority at this location”.

### **1.2 Permanent closure was anticipated in Corridor plans**

The closure of this part of University Road was shown in 2021 as part of the draft scheme for the Bus Deal Route 2 Strategic Corridor Plans. There it was described as follows: “Existing temporary closure to be made permanent. Public realm scheme, including segregated cycle permeability, cycle parking, landscaping and pedestrian facilities to be progressed.”

The introduction of the current permanent closure can therefore be seen as a considered action, not just a temporary Covid-related intervention that was intended to be removed later.

### **1.3 The TRO’s justifications**

The TRO’s justifications for re-opening this section of University Road to motor traffic given in the proposal documents are:

- the benefits not sufficient to support its continuation
- the prohibition of motor vehicles is no longer a proportionate response at this location

It is acknowledged that:

- prioritising motor traffic is not in line / in accordance with current local and national policy / traffic hierarchy

## **2 Weighing up the reasons**

### **2.1 Impact on pedestrians**

In the comments BWA made on the Route 2 Corridor plans, we pointed out that the stretch of Queens Road that passes University Road is one of the sections of highway in the city that is most frequently used by pedestrians. As well as being used for commuting into and out of the centre, it provides access to the local high street shops and to the University and to the Museum and Art

Gallery. We suggested the footway at this point needed to be wider to cater for the current pedestrian flow and to allow more pedestrian use of this footway to encourage active travel.

By re-opening the junction with University Road to motor vehicles, pedestrian safety will be compromised. Not only will pedestrians have to navigate their way along the footway, paying attention to avoiding other pedestrians, but will additionally have to be aware of vehicles turning into University Road without warning.

## **2.2 Benefits not sufficient and no longer a proportionate response**

The existing route via Queen's Avenue and Elmfield Road is perfectly adequate to reach the upper half of University Road. This is a minor inconvenience compared with the potential harm of impeding flows of motor vehicles, cyclists and particularly pedestrians along the strategic corridor.

## **2.3 Contrary to local and national policy**

The proposed re-opening is contrary to local and national policy to prioritise pedestrians over other forms of transport and to encourage active travel.

## **2.4 Other possible reasons for re-opening that are not mentioned in the TRO**

We approached the Cabinet member for Transport, Cllr Don Alexander, for what other reasons there might be for re-opening this road. He suggested:

- to retain the resilience in the network for south to north west journeys (sic)
- greater resilience in the network, especially for the taxi rank users on Queens Road
- removes traffic from the CAZ outside the hospital
- an alternative route for travel towards Gloucester Road
- alternative routes while work is underway on Park Row and Upper Maudlin Street

### **2.4.1 Network resilience**

There is no alternative route that can accommodate enough vehicles to make a significant difference to traffic along Park Row and Upper Maudlin Street. Traffic going along University Road would either have to re-join Park Row via Woodland Road or would have to re-join Upper Maudlin Street via Tyndall Avenue and St Michael's Hill (in either case producing additional motor vehicle pollution due to going up the hill).

The "Bus Deal - Strategic Corridors update" paper to the Cabinet meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> May says for the route 2 scheme: "The northern section, from Park Street to the north, will be reviewed and further modelling work undertaken to support proposals in the corridor OBC." In the light of this, this TRO seems premature; it would be better to at least defer a decision on the TRO and wait for the modelling work to be done in order to inform the TRO.

### **2.4.2 Accommodating taxis**

There is currently a taxi rank at the Triangle on Queens Road a few yards prior to the junction with University Road. From this point it can be difficult to cross Queens Road to drive around the Triangle gyratory in order to go north.

But the Route 2 Corridor draft proposals suggest taxis could be accommodated by having a rank on Queens Road before the bus stops and also one on Triangle South. Either location would allow greater flexibility for taxi drivers to head in the direction they required using the gyratory.

Looking at the Route 2 consultation feedback, the Bristol Blue Licensed Taxi Association did not object to the University Road closure or to moving the taxi rank. Indeed, in the consultation feedback there were no objections at all to the closure of University Road.

### **2.4.3 Travel towards Gloucester Road and removing traffic from the CAZ.**

Traffic aiming for Gloucester Road should not be taking rat-runs through the residential streets of Kingsdown and Cotham.

In addition, the proposals are incompatible with future changes. The highway changes proposed as part of the University of Bristol Library scheme (whose planning application has been approved, subject to conditions) will in due course close off access to motor vehicles to the section of Woodland Road going towards Tyndall's Park Road and along Tyndall Avenue (except to buses). So the proposal will also not act as a route that removes traffic from the CAZ outside the hospital.

### **2.4.4 Alternative routes while work is underway on Park Row and Upper Maudlin Street**

A permanent TRO cannot be justified for a temporary issue.

But in any case, there is little benefit in diverting traffic up University Road and down Woodland Road to re-join the Park Row queue. It does not have any benefit for works on Park Row down from Woodland Road and beyond on Maudlin Street.

## **2.5 Equalities impact**

The Equalities Impact Assessment associated with this TRO proposal points out that some parking spaces on University Road are no longer accessible due to no right turn being allowed into University Road from Elmdale Road. This is potentially a disadvantage to disabled people who might have used them as the closest parking to Bristol Museum and Art Gallery.

These parking spaces are on a hill, which some disabled people find less than ideal. However, it would be possible to make this section of University Road into a cul-de-sac, accessed from Elmdale Road, and explicitly dedicate some disabled parking spaces there.

We feel the Equalities Impact Assessment should have also mentioned the disadvantage to elderly and disabled pedestrians going along Queens Road of reintroducing motor traffic to the currently closed junction of University Road and Queens Road.

## **3 Conclusion**

The closure of the end of University Road was one small improvement helping pedestrians in this area, which already suffers from limited space and high pedestrian footfall.

The reasons given for re-opening this section of road do not stand up to scrutiny, nor do they align with local or national traffic policy.

We object strongly to the TRO as proposed.