

Mill Road Bridge Permanent Traffic Regulation Order

To: Highways and Transport Committee

Meeting Date: 7th March 2023

From: Executive Director, Place and Sustainability

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: Yes

Forward Plan ref: 2023/042

Outcome: To consider representations received during the five-week Mill Road bridge Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) notice period to the proposed modal filter and to decide on whether to introduce the TRO

Recommendation: Committee is asked to:

- a) Determine the formal objections without holding a public enquiry;
- b) Approve the proposed modal filter on Mill Road bridge, as advertised; and
- c) Inform the objectors accordingly

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1. Background

- 1.1 On 12 July 2022 the Highways and Transport Committee considered the results of the Greater Cambridge Partnership's consultation on Mill Road modal filter proposals. The Committee resolved to publish a TRO to reinstate the modal filter on Mill Road, including exemptions for disabled and taxis, to improve sustainable travel opportunities on Mill Road. This report asks Members to consider the objections received through the statutory process.

Mill Road – Experimental Bus Gate 2020 - 2021

- 1.2 In June 2020 a Bus Gate was installed on Mill Road railway bridge with the aim of encouraging sustainable travel whilst enabling social distancing during the pandemic. It was implemented under an Experimental Traffic Order (ETO) and restricted vehicular traffic over the bridge, except for buses and emergency vehicles, and allowed cyclists and pedestrians. Feedback from the statutory objection period and a public survey showed a mixed response from the public on whether or not to make the ETO permanent. On 27 July 2021 the Highways and Transport Committee resolved to remove the Bus Gate restriction but to then undertake a full review and public consultation on the options and use of Mill Road.
- 1.3 On 4 November 2021, the Committee resolved to request that the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) undertake the work to review and consult on options for Mill Road within the context of its City Access proposals.

Greater Cambridge Partnership Review of Mill Road 2022

- 1.4 The GCP public consultation on Mill Road sought to demonstrate how proposals for Mill Road would work with the City Access strategy, achieve the widest possible exposure of proposals through a multi-channel approach, and provide assurance of the public consultation process. The consultation was carried out in Spring 2022 and included focus group meetings with key stakeholders and a public survey between 7 February and 21 March. 1,986 responses were received in total, with a large amount of qualitative feedback, including responses from a number of different groups and organisations. The full consultation report is available here: [Mill-Road-Spring-2022-Report \(greatercambridge.org.uk\)](https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/mill-road-spring-2022-report)
- 1.5 Key findings of the GCP public consultation include:
- 54% of 1,962 respondents indicated 'congestion' was the most important issue affecting the way they use Mill Road. Other issues included pavements (17%), speeding (14%), parking (12%).
 - 77% of 1,974 respondents opposed 'Theme 1: Do nothing' whilst 83% supported 'Theme 2: Improve the quality of the place' and 77% supported 'Theme 3: Changes to traffic and access in the medium and long term'.

- 72% of 1,975 respondents supported restricting motor vehicles from crossing Mill Road bridge and 70% supported possible allowances for buses, taxis and drivers with disabilities and/or mobility needs.

Respondents to the public consultation clearly supported a re-instatement of the Mill Road modal filter but with important caveats such as allowing exemptions for disabled residents and taxis. They also supported improvements to the public realm, walking, cycling and local parking along Mill Road.

1.6 A report on the GCP review was provided to the Committee at its 12 July 2022 meeting. The Committee agreed to progress with the next steps to enable the implementation of the modal filter. The Committee was aware that there is a statutory requirement to consult on a TRO as part of this process. The Committee duly approved the recommendations to consult on a TRO, with exemptions including disabled residents and taxis, to work with the Combined Authority and GCP on a public realm scheme, to work with GCP on the Network Hierarchy Review and to monitor and review traffic levels should the modal filter be reintroduced.

2. Main Issues

2.1 In Autumn 2022 a series of meetings was held to discuss the nature of the exemptions involving Council officers from Parking Operations, Traffic Management, Policy and Regulation, Transport Strategy, Blue Badge team and the Project team as well as local Councillors, Councillor Bird and the City Council Disability Panel.

2.2 The Mill Road Bus Gate TRO was advertised on 28 November 2022; the proposed TRO would restrict vehicular traffic over the railway bridge, but with a greater number of exemptions than the earlier Bus Gate scheme: local buses, cyclists, pedestrians, taxis/PHVs, blue badge holders and authorised vehicles would all be exempt.

2.3 The TRO notice period then followed, from 28 November 2022 to 6 January 2023, in which formal objections to the proposal, together with the grounds on which they were made or any additional comments, could be sent in writing to the County Council's Policy and Regulation team. It should be noted that the formal consultation stage of a TRO is open for all to comment on. All comments must be duly considered before a TRO can be made operational and the scheme implemented on site.

2.4 The Policy and Regulation team received 690 objections (and also 291 comments supporting the TRO) from both individuals and different groups and organisations. Of the 690 objections, 374 provided no rationale; similarly of the 291 supportive comments, 47 did not provide a rationale. 316 objections and 244 supportive comments were submitted with detailed feedback.

Key findings of the statutory consultation include:

Objections

- Negative impact on businesses
- Limited access to businesses and amenities
- Increased congestion and air pollution on alternative routes
- Unfair on those with mobility issues who are not blue badge holders

Support

- Safer for walking and cycling
- Reduced traffic and air pollution on Mill Road
- Improved accessibility and environment
- GCP consultation showed both local and wider community supported the scheme

See Appendix 1 for a table summary of the main themes (and CCC responses).

2.5 The objections to the proposed TRO closely reflected those that had been raised in the 2022 GCP public consultation. No new issues were raised; many of those groups and individuals who opposed the modal filter in the public consultation have also sent in objections to the TRO. When the Committee unanimously approved the recommendation to consult on the TRO in July 2022, they did so with an understanding of the thorough nature of the 2022 public consultation and the fact that 72% of respondents supported restrictions on motor vehicles crossing the bridge.

2.6 If the TRO is approved by the Committee, the next steps would be:

From 8 March 2023, blue badge holders would be able to register two vehicles for exemption via an online application form. The application would then be processed and an email sent to the blue badge holder confirming the exemption is in place. Blue badge holders should allow up to three working days for their application to be processed.

May/June 2023 - a temporary layout including cameras, signs and road markings, would initially be installed at either end of the railway bridge. Signs would also be installed along Mill Road and on nearby streets to inform drivers about the new road layout and to advise drivers that businesses on Mill Road remain accessible and open as usual. The temporary layout would allow the scheme to be implemented whilst an agreement with Network Rail is reached on the nature of the permanent layout on the railway bridge.

Late summer 2023 - works on the permanent layout would begin.

2.7 The traffic restrictions would be enforced by Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras with the registered owner of any non-exempt motor vehicle recorded using the bridge receiving a fine. There would be a period of grace, of about a month, when non-exempt drivers would receive warning notices only and if they are exempt, would be encouraged to register on-line.

2.8 Funding is being sought for work to develop and implement public realm improvements on Mill Road. This work would initially consider what changes might be made to improve the environment for those who live on and around Mill Road and for those that visit to access shops and services, and to support those shops and services on Mill Road. Possible measures to be investigated could include (but are not exclusive to):

- Measures to declutter areas, for example by widening pavements or relocating street furniture, allowing for more space to be given to pedestrian and amenity use.

- Renewal of street furniture and pavement surfacing.
- Work with businesses on Mill Road to consider whether their servicing needs can be better addressed, and reduce conflict of servicing activities with other users of Mill Road.
- A more comprehensive consideration of how space on the bridge is used with the bus gate in place; by buses, permitted vehicle users, pedestrians and cyclists.

2.9 This work would be undertaken in discussion with the local community and local stakeholders. Timescales depend on the availability of funding, but it is anticipated that scoping, design and engagement / consultation could be undertaken in 2023/24.

2.10 Mill Road traffic monitoring:

Traffic levels are now higher than they were in 2019 (before the pandemic):

- 2019 - daily vehicle flows of 6,000 to 8,000 on the eastern section of Mill Road;
- Autumn 2022 - daily vehicle flows of over 9,600 along the same section.

If the TRO is approved, the County Council would closely monitor the impact on traffic in the surrounding area. Traffic monitors are located at:

- Mill Road (near Hobart Road and Mortimer Road)
- Tenison Road
- Station Road
- Gonville Place
- Hills Road (near Norwich Street and on railway bridge)
- Cherry Hinton Road
- Coleridge Road
- Perne Road
- Coldham's Lane
- East Road

2.11 Air Quality Monitoring:

Cambridge City Council ran a trial of Air Quality (AQ) monitoring sensors during the closure of the railway bridge in 2019 (for Network Rail works) so AQ data on Mill Road and the diversion routes from that time is available for any comparison analysis. If the TRO is approved, the County Council would work with the City Council and Connecting Cambridgeshire to ensure AQ sensors are in place and providing the required data (NO₂, CO₂ emissions, fine particles).

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 Environment and Sustainability

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- A modal filter on Mill Road bridge would reduce congestion and encourage active travel, therefore decreasing motor vehicle use which would have a positive impact on the environment and sustainable travel choices

- Improved air quality would be beneficial for the environment on Mill Road.
- Monitoring of traffic levels and air quality on alternative routes would need to be undertaken post-implementation.

3.2 Health and Care

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- A modal filter on Mill Road bridge would encourage more trips to be made by active travel modes and therefore increase regular physical activity.
- Lower traffic levels would improve road safety and air quality.

3.3 Places and Communities

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- A modal filter on Mill Road bridge would reduce traffic levels, encourage active travel between communities and support future place-making measures such as wider pavements and public realm improvements.
- A modal filter on Mill Road may lengthen some vehicle journeys between communities.

3.4 Children and Young People

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- A modal filter on Mill Road bridge would reduce traffic levels and improve road safety thus better connecting communities to schools and supporting safer routes to schools.
- Children and young people often do not have access to a car or cannot afford public transport and so more safe cycling and walking provides increased opportunities for independent travel.

3.5 Transport

The report above sets out details of significant implications.

4. Significant Implications

4.1 Resource Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The Council has the power under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to make Traffic Regulation Orders. The appropriate statutory procedures regarding advertisement and consultation must be followed. If any objections are received then these have to be thoroughly considered before a final decision is taken.

The Council has considered the provisions of sections 1 and 122 Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and considers that it is expedient to make the order for the reasons set out in this report.

The deadline for the making of the order is two years following the publication date of the notice of proposals.

The order can be challenged by way of judicial review within 6 weeks of the date the order is made.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

See Equality Impact Assessment in Appendix 2

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.4.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- Close working with the local community on the design of the bridge restrictions would be essential as with the future public realm scheme.
- Local members have been regularly informed of the progress of the TRO scheme and informal meetings have taken place.

4.7 Public Health Implications

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- The scheme would encourage a greater number of trips to access key services and work and leisure destinations to be made by active modes, thus promoting healthy choices
- Increased active travel would decrease car use, especially for shorter journeys, thus leading to a reduction in air pollution.

4.8 Climate Change and Environment Implications on Priority Areas

4.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Neutral

4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Positive:

Explanation:

Implementation of the scheme would lead to more walking and cycling as well as more journeys undertaken by public transport and few car journeys.

4.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.

Neutral

4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Neutral

4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:

Neutral

4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Positive:

Explanation:

Implementation of the scheme would lead to fewer car journeys and reduce air pollution on Mill Road; however increased congestion on alternative routes may lead to poorer air quality. It should be noted that the City Council Air Quality Monitoring report on the full bridge closure in 2019 stated: *“Despite the significant changes in traffic volumes on some of the roads in the study area, there was no discernible corresponding change in air pollutant concentrations”*.

4.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure, and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.

Neutral

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? **Yes**

Name of Financial Officer: Sarah Heywood

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the Head of Procurement & Commercial? **Yes**

Name of Officer: Clare Ellis

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or Pathfinder Law? **Yes**

Name of Legal Officer: Anne Gerzon

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your EqIA Super User?

Yes or No

Name of Officer: **David Allatt**

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?

Yes

Name of Officer: Sarah Silk

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? **Yes**

Name of Officer: David Allatt

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?

Yes

Name of Officer: Iain Green

If a Key decision, have any Climate Change and Environment implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer?

Yes

Name of Officer: Emily Bolton

5. Source documents guidance

5.1 Source documents

Copies of the written representations (redacted) received during the consultation period.
Copies of the consultation documents (public notice, site notices, consultation letters – sent to residents and statutory consultees).

5.2 Location

Available upon request from the Policy & Regulation team:
(policyandregulation@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)