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Mill Road ETRO: Summary Report of Statutory Objections

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Executive Summary

Between 24 June and 24 December Cambridgeshire County Council held a consultation on the Emergency Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) on Mill Road. Between these dates a 6-month statutory objection order was conducted that gave members of the public and stakeholders the opportunity to write in and comment on the ETRO. In addition, a consultation survey was conducted between 9 November and 24 December 2020, which a separate report summarises.

668 responses from 577 individuals and stakeholders were received through the Policy & Regulation email addresses.

The key findings of this piece of work are:

- **Impact on businesses.** There were concerns about negative impacts on businesses on Mill Road, particularly a loss of trade. Some respondents felt that more could be done to work with/assist businesses in the area. Re-opening the bridge was the predominant view among those who felt the bridge closure was causing the loss of trade, however there was also other suggestions, including; allowing businesses, particularly their deliveries, to be exempt from the closure and/or removing delivery restrictions on Mill Road; helping businesses by advertising the area more widely; reducing business rates; and improving the signage for the closure so it was clear the bridge was still accessible to pedestrians/cyclists and that access was still available by motorised vehicle elsewhere
- **Impacts on pollution and safety.** That air pollution, noise pollution, and general safety (excluding the 'build-outs') for pedestrians and cyclists had improved along Mill Road due to the bridge closure reducing the amount of motorised traffic. However, some respondents were concerned that traffic had been/could be displaced onto surrounding areas and other bridges across the railway, causing a negative impact on air pollution, noise pollution and safety elsewhere, particularly areas that were residential in nature
- **Concerns about the build outs.** The 'build-outs' were perceived as dangerous by some respondents due to their placements near junctions, their negative impact on sight lines for those on the road, and the need for vulnerable road users such as cyclists to move into potential oncoming traffic.
- **Exemptions to the bridge closure.** That some form of exemptions to the bridge closure were needed. Predominantly this was called for those with blue badges but also included taxis and local residents, in order to avoid isolating vulnerable members of the community and those who couldn't walk or cycle. There was also a call for businesses, particularly their deliveries, to be exempt

Methodology Summary

The notice regarding the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order for Mill Road was available through the County Council website. This notice explained that Mill Road would be closed to all motor vehicles, except local buses and pedal cycles, from the 24 June 2020 for an initial experimental period of eighteen-months. This notice was advertised in a local newspaper, Cambridge News, as well as site notices being erected on both sides of the Mill Road bridge.

An email and postal address was provided within the notice for anyone to raise an objection, which would need to be received within six-months of the order coming in to place, from the 24 June to 24 December.

668 responses from 577 individuals and stakeholders (respondents) were received through the Policy & Regulation email addresses. During the quality assurance process, responses from the same individual (identified through email address) or stakeholder (identified by who was being represented) were grouped together to ensure views were represented accurately.

Analysis

Responses were analysed using qualitative methods, namely through thematic analysis using a frame of themes. The frame of themes were:

- **Impact on Mill Road area**
 - Walking and cycling
 - Positive
 - Neutral
 - Negative
 - Business
 - Positive
 - Neutral
 - Negative
 - Air Quality
 - Positive
 - Neutral
 - Negative
 - Noise
 - Positive
 - Neutral
 - Negative
 - Safety
 - Positive
 - Neutral
 - Negative
 - Social Distancing
 - Positive
 - Neutral
- Accessibility and Equalities
 - Negative
 - Elderly
 - Disabled
 - Ethnicity
 - Sex
 - other
- Exemptions

- **Impact on Surrounding Areas**
 - Coldhams Lane
 - Newmarket Road
 - Hills Road
 - Coleridge Road
 - Cherry Hinton Road
 - Other

These themes are identified using specialist software and then responses tagged with these themes (multiple tags can be given to the same response). At this stage totals of tagged themes are created, and sample quotes chosen for the final report that typify particular tagged themes. Comment themes are listed in order of the number of comments received, from most to least. The percentage of responses to each theme is included in the report. In the reporting of themes 'most' represents where over 50% of respondents' comments were applicable, 'some' represents 25%-49%, and 'few' represents less than 25% of comments.

Statutory objections summary

Of the 577 respondents who contacted Policy & Regulation as part of the statutory objections phase of the Mill Road ETRO consultation period, **51% (293)** of them indicated they **objected** to the Mill Road ETRO. The reasons given were:

- **‘Business’** - 57% of those who objected. Responses discussed:
 - Concerns that the bridge closure had resulted in less passing trade, resulting in the potential and actual loss of local businesses in the area
 - There was concern this closure had compounded issues relating to closures on Mill Road in 2019
 - There was concern from respondents that Mill Road’s atmosphere had been negatively impacted by the closure, feeling the area was less ‘lively’
 - Concerns that the bridge closure was causing long delays to deliveries and for workers whose base was located on Mill Road, increasing costs and reducing the amount of work that could be done
 - Respondents felt that businesses could be offered more support from the council to adapt. Suggestions included; help with business rates; help with advertising the area; careful management of the signage, these respondents felt the use of the ‘word’ closure was inappropriate as only one area of the road limited access from motorised vehicles
- **‘Impact on surrounding areas’** – 47% of those who objected. Responses discussed:
 - Concerns that the closure had displaced traffic onto surrounding residential roads, causing congestion issues, a drop in air quality, and an increased risk of accidents
- **‘Safety’** - 39% of those who objected. Responses discussed:
 - That the build outs had caused conflicts between different forms of traffic, mostly buses and cyclists but there was also mentions of personal vehicles, as they attempted to pass in opposite directions. The build outs were felt to cause too much narrowing of the road and reduce line of sight, making it unsafe for cyclists
 - That better signage was needed for the one-way system for pedestrians and to indicate the road was only closed in one area to motorised vehicles. A lack of clarity from these signs was felt to be decreasing safety
 - That the closure had resulted in motorised vehicles making dangerous manoeuvres to turn around, making the area less safe for cyclists and pedestrians
 - That the road should be made one way instead of the closure, with the extra lane used to create safe cycle/pedestrian space
 - That the decrease in traffic meant Mill Road was unsafe to travel through at night
 - That enforcement was needed for anti-social/dangerous cycling. These respondents were particularly concerned about cyclists on the footpaths

- A few respondents indicated they felt Mill Road was safer for cyclists and pedestrians but, alongside the lack of access for taxis and Blue Badge holders/disabled drivers, the closure created more issues including decreased safety on surrounding roads
- **'Walking and cycling'** - 36% of those who objected. Responses discussed:
 - That the build outs had caused conflicts between different forms of traffic, mostly buses and cyclists but there was also mentions of personal vehicles, as they attempted to pass in opposite directions. The build outs were felt to cause too much narrowing of the road and reduce line of sight, making it unsafe for cyclists
 - That better signage was needed for the one-way system for pedestrians and to indicate the road was only closed in one area to motorised vehicles. A lack of clarity from these signs was felt to be decreasing safety
 - That the closure had resulted in motorised vehicles making dangerous manoeuvres to turn around, making the area less safe for cyclists and pedestrians
 - That the road should be made one way instead of the closure, with the extra lane used to create safe cycle/pedestrian space
 - That enforcement was needed for anti-social/dangerous cycling. These respondents were particularly concerned about cyclists on the footpaths
 - A few respondents indicated they felt Mill Road was safer for cyclists and pedestrians but, alongside the lack of access for taxis and Blue Badge holders/disabled drivers, the closure created more issues including decreased safety on surrounding roads
- **'Accessibilities and Equalities'** - 36% of those who objected. Responses discussed:
 - 55% of these discussed the proposals impacts on those with **'Disabilities'**. Discussion points included:
 - Concerns that the proposals were causing disabled residents to become segregated from the city centre. These respondents felt that there was need for some form of access across the bridge for those with disabilities that made walking/cycling difficult. Suggestions included; allowing blue badge holders to be exempt from the closure; allowing taxis to be exempt from the closure
 - Concerns that the closure was increasing the cost of use and time traveling for taxis and car travel for disabled users due to the extended, more congested, routes they needed to take
 - 25% on the impact on the **'Elderly'**. Discussions points were the same as those relating to 'Disability', with these respondents discussing the impacts on both older residents and those with disabilities
 - 13% on the impact on **'Other'** groups under the Equality Act. These included, children and those on low income. Discussion points included:

- That the increased cost of use for taxis and personal vehicles, due to the detours needed to cross the bridge, were having an adverse effect on those on low incomes
 - That the buildouts were unsuitable for pushchairs and similar as well as being dangerous to younger cyclists due to the increased risk of conflict from the narrowed road
 - 4% on the impact on **'Ethnicity'**. Discussion points included:
 - That the proposals negatively impacted on those from minority ethnic backgrounds due to the nature of the businesses in the area (and the negative impact the closure was having on these businesses) and the increased difficulty accessing places of worship
 - 4% on the impact on **'Sex'**. Discussion points included:
 - That the reduction in traffic along Mill Road, particularly at night, was leading to a reduction in safety for women
 - Concerns the increased cost of taxis was resulting in more women walking alone Mill Road at night, compounding the issue
- **'Social distancing'** – 25% of those who objected. Responses discussed:
 - There was concern that social distancing improvements were being used as an excuse to close the road and hinder motorised traffic
 - That the signage, particularly for the one-way system for pedestrians to socially distance but also to what the build outs were for, should be made clearer, as pedestrians did not appear to be socially distancing in the area
 - Debate about whether the proposals had any impact on Covid-19 transmission, as these respondents felt outside transmission rates were too low for concern, particularly on passing others in the street
- **'Exemptions'** - 22% of those who objected. Responses discussed:
 - The need for some form of access across the bridge for residents that found walking/cycling difficult. Suggestions included; allowing blue badge holders to be exempt from the closure; allowing taxis to be exempt from the closure
 - The need for Mill Road businesses to have some form of access across the bridge for deliveries
- **'Air quality'** – 7% of those who objected. Responses discussed:
 - Concerns the buildouts were causing hold ups for motorised traffic, resulting in more engine idling and decreased air quality
 - That air quality was improved on Mill Road, but the displacement of traffic onto surrounding areas was causing a decrease in air quality elsewhere
- 3% of responses stated they **'opposed the Mill Road ETRO'** but, outside of a few of these respondents being concerned about the lack of prior consultation to the closure, did not give a specific reason for their opposition

- **'Noise'** – 1% of those who objected. Responses were similar to the of 'Air quality', in that the buildouts were felt to increase congestion and so noise pollution, and that noise pollution was improved on Mill Road but worse in surrounding areas due to the displacement of traffic

45% (261) indicated they **supported** the Mill Road ETRO. The reasons given were:

- **'Walking and cycling'** - 74% of those who supported. Responses discussed:
 - That the decrease in motorised traffic had resulted in Mill Road being safer and more pleasant, due to lower noise and air pollution, for pedestrians and cyclists
 - There was discussion from some of these respondents about it making them or was making them more likely to use Mill Road as a shopping destination
 - Some of these respondents indicated that they felt more comfortable allowing children/young people to cycle on Mill Road
 - Some of these respondents felt that the reduction in traffic was helping with social distancing, as pedestrians could safely 'step out' onto the road when required
 - That more enforcement was needed to reduce speeding vehicles, circumventing of the closure, and pavement parking
 - That widening of the pavement was needed more generally along Mill Road as well as adding cycle lanes, cycle parking, and seating
 - A few respondents felt the build-outs required some improvements, specifically that they give more room for cyclists to pass to avoid conflict with oncoming vehicles, particularly as lines of sight were not ideal
- **'Safety'** – 66% of those who supported. Responses discussed:
 - That the decrease in motorised traffic had resulted in Mill Road being safer for pedestrians and cyclists
 - Some of these respondents indicated that they felt more comfortable allowing children/young people to cycle on Mill Road
 - That better signage was needed to indicate the road was only closed in one area to motorised vehicles. A lack of clarity from these signs was felt to be decreasing safety
 - That more enforcement was needed to reduce speeding vehicles, circumventing of the closure, and pavement parking
 - That the build-outs required some improvements, specifically that they give more room for cyclists to pass to avoid conflict with oncoming vehicles, particularly as lines of sight were not ideal
- **'Business'** – 57% of those who supported. Responses discussed:
 - That the decrease in motorised traffic had resulted in Mill Road being safer and more pleasant, due to lower noise and air pollution, for pedestrians and cyclists, with respondents indicating that either they themselves were visiting

businesses more often or that the improvements would increasing footfall and passing trade

- There was discussions about using the build outs or increased pedestrianising of the area to make it more attractive for customers
 - That exemptions to the closure and/or increasing parking for blue badge holders/disabled drivers and delivery vehicles, particularly removing the current restrictions, should be considered in order to help businesses and their customers
 - That considerations should be made towards businesses in the area and adaptations made alongside them to help negate any potential negative impacts. Suggestions included improving the signage to make it clear businesses were still open and motorised vehicle access was still possible, and that businesses/delivery vehicles should be exempt from the closure and/or restrictions on deliveries lifted
- **‘Air quality’** – 41% of those who supported. Responses discussed:
 - That the reduction in motorised traffic had increased air quality on Mill Road
- **‘Accessibilities and Equalities’** - 27% of those who supported. Responses discussed:
 - 48% of these discussed the proposals impacts on those with **‘Disabilities’**. Discussion points included:
 - That there was need for some form of access across the bridge for those with disabilities that made walking/cycling difficult, by allowing blue badge holders to be exempt from the closure
 - That more disabled parking should be made available on Mill Road
 - That improvements should be made to the pavement space, either through widening or maintenance
 - That any street furniture avoids on-path placement to avoid hindering visually impaired pedestrians
 - That some form of shuttle bus/taxi service should be available along Mill Road for those that find walking/cycling difficult
 - 48% on the impact on **‘Other’** groups under the Equality Act, namely children/younger residents. These respondents felt the reduction in motorised traffic had made it safer for younger pedestrians and cyclists and the improvements to air quality meant less long-term health problems
 - 4% on the impact on **‘Elderly’** residents. Responses discussed:
 - That some form of shuttle bus/taxi service should be available along Mill Road for those that find walking/cycling difficult
 - That pavement space required better maintenance to avoid trip hazards
 - That improvements to air quality meant less long-term health problems
- **‘Social distancing’** - 20% of those who supported. Responses discussed:

- That the reduction in traffic was helping with social distancing, as pedestrians could safely 'step out' onto the road when required
- That the measures implemented had improved the ability to socially distance, as many of the paths were felt to be too narrow to do this normally
 - Some of these respondents still felt that more pavement widening was needed to allow people to safely socially distance
- That more enforcement/better signage was needed for the one-way system for pedestrians, as respondents felt this wasn't being adhered to
- **'Noise'** – 16% of those who supported. Responses discussed:
 - That the reduction in motorised traffic had reduced noise pollution on Mill Road
- 11% of responses stated they **'supported the Mill Road ETRO'** but did not give a specific reason for their support
- **'Exemptions'** – 8% of those who supported. Responses discussed:
 - That blue badge holders should be exempt from the bridge closure to ensure access wasn't limited for those who found walking/cycling difficult
 - That businesses/delivery vehicles should be exempt from the bridge closure and/or that delivery restrictions should be lifted to negate negative impacts on local businesses
 - There was debate among these respondents about whether taxis should be exempt from the bridge closure. Some felt they should in order to reduce the financial/time burden on those who may not be able to afford it and needed to use taxis, while some felt that they should not be exempt as it would decrease safety for cyclists
- **'Impact on surrounding areas'** – 8% of those who supported. Responses discussed:
 - Respondents were concerned that the Mill Road bridge closure could result in increased traffic in other nearby roads, particularly once Covid-19 restrictions are eased. These respondents felt this needed to be monitored and measures put in place to avoid it, particularly as they were residential streets

The remaining 4% (23) gave no indication of support or opposition and had contacted only to request further information (and in one case, sent an empty email).