Objections to Experimental Traffic Regulation Order
- Smith Street, Rochdale

Executive Summary

1.1 Over a period of time, concerns were raised by members of the public, members and officers about the conflict between buses and pedestrians along Smith Street. The introduction of a zebra crossing, and Look Left and Look Right road markings mitigated the risk, but the construction of the new Council building, Number One Riverside, and the random nature of the pedestrian desire lines resulted in the conflict continuing.

1.2 Surveys conducted show that the frequency of buses using Smith Street is around one every three minutes on average. This is a low use of a public highway and in itself a concern as there is a risk of pedestrians becoming complacent and showing less caution when crossing the road.

1.3 Removing the conflict between buses and pedestrians would require the introduction of a new Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) on Smith Street to prohibit its use by motor vehicles at its eastern end. Buses would be required to use Water Street to access the bus station.

1.4 In discussions with TfGM, it was agreed that if a TRO was to be promoted, this should be in the form of an experimental TRO, so that the impact on buses could be fully assessed over a period of time.

1.5 An Experimental TRO was introduced on 29th January 2017 and during the 6 month objection period, 4 objections were received. The objectors main concern is the added delay to buses which the order creates.

1.6 The report outlines the reason for the proposal in more detail, the objections received and a response to the objections.
2. The Committee should consider whether the proposed Traffic Regulation Order, Borough of Rochdale (Smith Street, Rochdale) Experimental (Prohibition of Motor Vehicles), Experimental (Prohibition of Motor Vehicles (Except Buses)), Experimental Suspension of the (Borough of Rochdale (Smith Street, Rochdale) (Prohibition of Motor Vehicles (Except Buses)) Order 2013), Experimental Suspension of Part of the (Borough of Rochdale((Civil Enforcement of Traffic Contraventions)(Various Streets)(Rochdale Township) Order 2008)(Amendment)(No.99) Order 2015) and Experimental Prohibition of Waiting Order 2017 be implemented, as advertised, or abandoned in light of the representations received, which are outlined in Appendix B of this report. It is the recommendation of Officers that the objections be dismissed and the experimental order be made permanent.

3. **Copy of Statement of Reasons**

Concerns were raised by members of the general public during the early days of the new bus station opening relating to crossing Smith Street and the access and egress to the bus station. Concerns by pedestrians wishing to cross Smith Street were addressed by the installation a Zebra Crossing.

Members requested the Highways Service to consider the remaining concerns related to crossing and access and egress. At the time pedestrian desire lines between the town centre and Number One Riverside resulted in pedestrians conflicting with buses using the bus station. Look Left and Look Right road markings were introduced at the crossing points.

During investigations it was identified that once the demolition of the Municipal Offices and the creation of the new car park and market area was completed opposite Number One Riverside, pedestrian desire lines would move with increased numbers crossing Smith Street from Number One Riverside diagonally towards the market area and shopping centre. It was also identified that the number of buses using Smith Street from the John Street direction was relatively low.

On the 1st of September 2014, a week long traffic survey was commenced. The survey counted the number of buses using Smith Street in one hour periods.

As can be expected the busiest period for bus movements was between 8am and 7pm when on average there were 20 buses per hour using the route.

A bus every 3 minutes on average is a low use of a public highway and in itself a concern as pedestrians become almost used to there being no buses, and hence, show less caution when crossing the carriageway.

If the Smith Street bus lane was closed to vehicles, this would remove the
conflict between buses and pedestrians on Smith Street between Milton Street and the bus station.

Buses will still be able to use the westerly side of Smith Street from the bus station exit to its junction with Constantine Road. Although this remains a conflict, the scheme will create other opportunities to cross safely.

All inbound buses could be rerouted to enter and circulate the bus station via Water Street, from Molesworth Street and Drake Street. To facilitate safe and unobstructed access via Water Street, waiting restrictions will be required along Water Street to prohibit parking.

There will be a six-month objection period for affected parties to raise their concerns.

A permanent TRO was initially suggested but, following discussions with the Traffic Manager at TfGM, an Experimental TRO would be preferred to allow the increased bus traffic along Water Street to be assessed, specifically the junction of Molesworth Street with Water Street.

Emergency vehicles and utility/street maintenance vehicles will be exempt from the proposed order. Buses will also be exempt in the event of an emergency situation which results in the access to the bus station from Water Street being restricted.

Subject to the experimental order being made permanent the surfacing of the carriageway will be raised to match the surrounding footway areas.

It is proposed to make an Experimental Order under the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, which will effectively remove buses accessing the bus station from Smith Street, except during emergencies or planned works that affect access from Water Street.

Additional waiting restrictions have already been promoted on Water Street to prevent indiscriminate parking and ensure clear access to the Bus Station is maintained. The TRO for these became operational on 1st November 2015.

The suspension of a limited waiting bay and the introduction of prohibition of waiting restrictions are proposed on Water Street near to the junction of Molesworth Street to enable the two-way flow of buses.

There would be a six-month consultation period allowing for objections to be raised.

If no objections are received within the six-month consultation period, the experimental TRO will become permanent.

3.1 A copy of the Experimental Order is attached as Appendix A.
Key Points for Consideration

4. During the consultation period the Authority received 4 objection letters.

4.1 To comply with the Local Authorities’ Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 the Authority must consider all objections submitted during the six month consultation period before ‘Making’ the Traffic Regulation Order.

4.2 It should be noted that in considering the report, the proposed Order is deemed strategic in nature and should be dealt with in accordance with Section 8.2-3 of the Scheme of Delegation to Township Committee. Committee has delegated power to confirm the proposals and the Order. However, if the Committee wish not to confirm the proposals and the Order, the matter must be referred to Cabinet for decision.

4.3 In considering the objections the Committee should be mindful that The Council, acting in its capacity as Highway Authority, have a duty of care to ensure the safety of the travelling public and a duty under the Traffic Management Act 2004 to maintain the expeditious movement of traffic.

4.4 The Objectors’ comments and the Director of Neighbourhoods response are attached at Appendix B and C of this report.

Alternatives Considered

4.5 The Committee could consider recommending that the experimental order not be made permanent.

4.6 Should Committee decide not to introduce the order then the conflict between pedestrians and buses will not be addressed.

Costs and Budget Summary

5. The cost of the proposed Traffic Regulation Order will be met by TfGM.

Risk and Policy Implications

6. The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that its highways operate safely and efficiently, for all traffic including pedestrians.

Consultation

7. Consultation required by the Local Authorities’ Traffic Orders, (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 has taken place.

7.1 The objection period ran until from 29th January to 29th July 2017.
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APPENDIX A – Copy of Experimental Order and Plan

BOROUGH OF ROCHDALE

(SMITH STREET, ROCHDALE)


The Rochdale Borough Council, in exercise of the powers under Sections 9 and 10 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (“the Act”) and of all other enabling powers and after consultation with the Chief Officer of Police in accordance with Section 124(1) and paragraph 20(1) of Part III of Schedule 9 to the Act, hereby make the following Order:-

1. This Order may be cited as the Borough of Rochdale (Smith Street, Rochdale) Experimental (Prohibition of Motor Vehicles), Experimental (Prohibition of Motor Vehicles (Except Buses)), Experimental Suspension of the (Borough of Rochdale (Smith Street, Rochdale) (Prohibition of Motor Vehicles (Except Buses)) Order 2013), Experimental Suspension of Part of the (Borough of Rochdale ((Civil Enforcement of Traffic Contraventions)(Various Streets)(Rochdale Township) Order 2008)(Amendment)(No.99) Order 2015) and Experimental Prohibition of Waiting Order 2017 and shall come into operation on 29th January 2017 and which will operate for an experimental period of 18 months.

2. In this Order:-
   “bus” has the same meaning as given in Regulation 22(2) of the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002.

3. Except where otherwise stated, any reference in this Order to a numbered Article or Schedule is a reference to the Article or Schedule bearing that number in this Order.

4. Save as provided in Articles 5, 6 and 7, no person shall cause or permit any vehicle to proceed in the lengths of road specified in Schedules 1 and 2 to this Order.

5. (1) Nothing in Article 4 shall render it unlawful to cause or permit any vehicle to enter or proceed in the lengths of road specified in Schedules 1 and 2 to this Order, so far as such entry or proceeding is reasonably necessary, to enable the vehicle to be used for the purposes of:-

   (a) A vehicle being used for ambulance, fire brigade or police purposes if
the observance of any provision of this Order would hinder the use of
the vehicle for the purpose on which it is being used on that occasion;
(b) In pursuance of statutory powers or duties of the Local Authority;
(c) For the laying, erection, alteration or repair of any sewer or of any
main, pipe or apparatus for the supply of gas, water, electricity or of
any telecommunications apparatus as defined in Schedule 2 to the
Telecommunications Act 1984 in or near the said length of road;
(d) Any building operation authorised by the Highway Authority;
(e) The maintenance, improvement or reconstruction of the said length of
road.

6. Nothing in Article 4 will prevent buses from proceeding along the length of road
specified in Schedule 2 to this Order.

7. Nothing in Article 4 will prevent buses from proceeding along the length of road
specified in Schedule 1 to this Order in situations when Rochdale Bus Station
cannot be accessed via Water Street and upon the direction or with the
permission of the Bus Station Manager.

8. The Interpretation Act 1978 shall apply for the interpretation of this Order as it
applies for the interpretation of an Act of Parliament.

9. The Prohibition imposed by this Order is in addition to and not in derogation of
any restriction, prohibition or requirement imposed by any other enactment and
any exception or exemption from the provision of this Order is without prejudice
to the provisions of any other enactment.

10. The Order detailed in Schedule 3 to this Order is hereby suspended for the
duration of the experimental period.

11. That part of the (Borough of Rochdale ((Civil Enforcement of Traffic
Contraventions)(Various Streets)(Rochdale Township) Order
2008)(Amendment)(No.99) Order 2015) detailed in Schedule 4 to this Order is
hereby suspended for the duration of the experimental period.

12. The Borough of Rochdale (Civil Enforcement of Traffic Contraventions) (Various
Streets) (Rochdale Township) Order 2008 is hereby amended by inserting the
wording shown in Schedule 5 to this Order for the duration of the experimental
period.

SCHEDULE 1

Experimental Prohibition of Motor Vehicles

Smith Street, Rochdale from its junction with Milton Street to the bus station egress
SCHEDULE 2
Experimental Prohibition of Motor Vehicles (Except Buses)

Smith Street, Rochdale From the bus station egress to its junction with Drake Street

SCHEDULE 3

Borough of Rochdale (Smith Street, Rochdale) (Prohibition of Motor Vehicles (Except Buses)) Order 2013

SCHEDULE 4

Schedule 1
Schedule No. 3.35
Waiting Limited Mon-Sat 8am-6pm 3 Hours, No Return Within 1 Hour

Water Street, Milkstone & Deeplish Ward

the south side from a point 23 metres west of its junction with Molesworth Street for a distance of 27 metres in a westerly direction

SCHEDULE 5

Schedule No. 1.1
No Waiting At Any Time

Water Street, Milkstone & Deeplish Ward

the south side from a point 23 metres west of its junction with Molesworth Street for a distance of 27 metres in a westerly direction

DATED this 17th day of January 2017

THE COMMON SEAL of THE ROCHDALE )

BOROUGH COUNCIL was hereunto )

affixed in the presence of: )

Authorised Signatory
Objection 1
(First Manchester Ltd)

I am writing to object to the permanent prohibition of Motor Vehicles on Smith Street, Rochdale Town Centre.

The experimental order for this prohibition has now been in place for nearly six months and during this time we have been assessing the impact upon on our operations:

- Journey times – Services 454, 457, 589 and 590 (total of 6 journeys an hour) are experiencing increased journey times of around 2 to 3 minutes, particularly during the late afternoon/PM peak, as a result of the diversion route. This has lead to, in some cases, with subsequent journeys leaving late and additional time having to be built into bus timetables.
- Extra mileage – these services involved are now taking a longer route, thereby increasing mileage (over 5,000 per year) and any associated pollution.
- Interchange - additional movements are required around the bus station, which is resulting in additional conflict between pedestrians and buses at crossing points.

I appreciate that following discussion prior to the introduction of the experimental order, various parking bays on Water Street were suspended and emergency access for buses on Smith Street were maintained.

Should a decision be made to keep Smith Street open, we would be happy to implement a voluntary 5 or 10 mph speed limit if requested by Rochdale Council. A similar scheme operates successfully in Manchester City Centre.

Should the closure of Smith Street be made permanent, I request that the following is implemented/maintained:

- An unimpeded route along Smith Street to ensure that the bus station can be accessed during an emergency such as heavy snow, road collapse etc. This route would need to be available at very short notice.

- All parking bays on Water Street, some of which are currently suspended, are permanently suspended to maintain an unimpeded route.

I thank you for considering the point made and should you wish to discuss this further, please contact Guy Warren, Network Manager on 0161 627 7208.
Objection 2  
(TfGM)

Experimental Prohibition of Motor Vehicles on Smith Street,  
Rochdale Town Centre

I am writing in response to the current experimental closure of Smith Street and the impact upon Rochdale bus station and associated bus operations, which commenced on 29th January 2017. The closure resulted in up to 20 buses per hour being displaced onto Water Street.

The experimental order has now been in place for nearly six month and during this time we have been assessing the impact upon the bus station and bus operations.

Prior to the legal process we raised a number of concerns regarding the closure and are thankful for the work and approach undertaken by Rochdale’s Network Management Team. This resulted in the suspension of various parking bays on Water Street and an emergency access for buses remaining on Smith Street.

Having discussed the outcome of the trial with the affected bus operators I have a number of points to raise:

- Journey times – The affected operators are reporting that during late afternoon / PM peak, journey times are increasing by around 2 to 3 minutes as a result of the diversion route. This has resulted in some cases with subsequent journeys leaving late and additional time having to be built into bus timetables.
- Interchange - Additional movements are required around the bus station, which is resulting in additional conflict between pedestrians and buses at crossing points.

Should the closure of Smith Street be made permanent, I request that the following is implemented / maintained:

- An unimpeded route along Smith Street to ensure that the bus station can be accessed during an emergency such as heavy snow, road collapse etc. This route would need to be available at very short notice.
- All parking bays on Water Street, some of which are currently suspended, are permanently suspended to maintain an unimpeded route.

Should a decision be made to keep Smith Street open, the bus operators have agreed to implement a voluntary 5 or 10 mph speed limit if requested by Rochdale Council. A similar scheme operates successfully in Manchester City Centre.

I am also keen to understand the layout of the new shopping centre development which I understand is being developed on the site north of Smith Street and how buses are able to best serve the development. Good convenient and direct public transport link are critical to the successful development of the site.

I trust the information provided is useful in deciding whether to implement the experimental order on a permanent basis and the requirements to provide access to the bus station. We look forward to continuing working with the Network Management Team going forward.
Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am a member of the Borough Transport Group, representing STORM (Support the Oldham, Rochdale and Manchester lines) and FOLSs (Friends of Littleborough Stations) but write to you in a personal capacity. However, I am reflecting the views of fellow public transport users who attend the group's meetings. Indeed this letter sums up the mood of the most recent meeting of the group - May 10th 2017.

I am concerned that the TRO (Traffic Regulation Order) has been in place since January this year and wish to object to it becoming permanent after the experimental period.

Buses coming from the east of the borough going in and out of the bus station now have to make two extra right turns to come down Water Street and into the bus station. The temporary blocking of Smith Street is unnecessary, time-consuming and causes more bus turning movements in the town centre.

There is very little pedestrian movement across this end of Smith Street so I fail to see any relevant safety issue. Pedestrians walking along this end of Smith Street will already have crossed the road if they intend to go to the Mecca Bingo; Aldi or other destinations in Entwistle Road.

I look forward to seeing buses being able to use Smith Street to access the bus station in the near future.
Objection 4
(Rosso)

Nathan McKendrey
Network Management
Rochdale Borough Council
Floor 2, No. 1 Riverside
Smith Street
Rochdale
OL16 1XU

Dear Mr McKendrey

Experimental Prohibition of Motor Vehicles on Smith Street, Rochdale Town Centre

I am writing in response to the current experimental closure of Smith Street and the impact upon Rochdale bus station and associated bus operations, which commenced on 29th January 2017.

The experimental order has now been in place for nearly six months and during this time we have been assessing the impact upon our company’s operations.

We would like to see the reinstatement of the bus only lane along Smith Street and during the experimental closure, we have come across the following problems:

1. Safety

The closure has resulted in up to 20 buses per hour being displaced onto Water Street and has also resulted in an increased number of turning manoeuvres on Smith Street between the Interchange and the tram stop. The closure of Smith Street has effectively forced every bus that enters the interchange to make a turn on this section of Smith Street, regardless of the ultimate direction of travel, especially increasing the number of full “U turn” manoeuvres being carried out in this area.

Previously, Smith Street could be used to access the interchange by vehicles exiting via Water Street and usually buses entering from Water Street would exit via Smith Street reducing the number of manoeuvres (especially U-turns) in this location.

There are a large number of pedestrian movements in this area and before this scheme was implemented we safety raised concerns relating to the additional conflict between pedestrian & bus movements being created in the area. We are pleased to state that we are unaware of any specific incidents involving pedestrians and buses however as pedestrian movements are only likely to increase we feel that a review of the road layout is required, should the closure become permanent. We would like to see something out in place that restricts the opportunities for pedestrians to cross the carriageway. This will become even more important in the future with the
increase in pedestrian movements that the proposed shopping development will bring with it and as interchange between bus and tram continues to increase.

2. Journey Times

Since the closure of Smith Street, journey times, particularly from mid-afternoons onwards have increased with buses sometimes taking 3-4 minutes longer to get from John Street to the interchange. We will be making changes to timetables to allow additional time but some of the services involved will not sustain additional resource so as well as bus passengers having to accept longer journey times, frequencies may also be affected.

At a recent “Your Bus Matters” feedback event organised by the passenger watchdog, Bus Users UK, a number of passengers expressed their frustration at being held up in queuing traffic on Water Street, Molesworth Street and John Street and would not only like to see Smith Street re-opened to buses but Baillie Street Street as well, so that buses could use this as way of beating the traffic queues to get onto John Street and beyond.

3. Parking on Water Street

During the experimental closure, from time to time we have experienced problems with parked cars on Water Street. Although some parking restrictions were put in place, many of the former parking bays are still painted on the road and it would appear that some of the signage may have been removed and so there are often cars parked on narrow sections of Water Street that makes it difficult for buses to pass, especially when there is queuing traffic along Water Street leading up to the junction with Molesworth Street.

I hope this information has been of use to you and you will take it into consideration when deciding whether to implement the experimental order on a permanent basis.
APPENDIX C – Response to Objections

The Council accepts that journey times have increased as a result of the experimental traffic order. This is clear from the representations received and was anticipated prior to the scheme being introduced. The Council also accepts that this results in some disruption to bus operators in terms of the scheduling of timetables.

The disadvantages to both bus operators and passengers must be measured against the benefits to pedestrian safety and the overall design of the town centre, from a commercial, aesthetic and functional point of view.

The completion of the new Council office building, Number One Riverside, led to an increase in pedestrians crossing Smith Street, to the west of Milton Street. The low use of the street by buses, an average of one every three minutes, results in pedestrians becoming complacent when crossing the road at this point. The conflict between buses and pedestrians therefore becomes more of a concern.

In deciding on the introduction of the scheme, the future development of the town centre should also be taken into consideration. The proposed development on the north side of Smith Street will increase pedestrian activity in the area, increasing the conflict between buses and pedestrians. The streetscape will change significantly and will result in an environment more comparable to a pedestrian zone.

The objectors also raise the issue of pedestrian safety at the entrance and exit points to the bus station along Smith Street. The closure of Smith Street forces all buses to enter the bus station via Water Street and due to the layout of the bus station this creates additional circulatory movements. These circulatory movements conflict with pedestrian movements along the south side of Smith Street. However, the location is directly outside the bus station and there have always been a high number of bus and pedestrian movements at these two points. Therefore, the issue of pedestrians becoming complacent is less of a concern. The Council are happy to work with TfGM to improve safety in this area as the town centre redevelopment continues.

Two objectors state that:

‘Should the closure of Smith Street be made permanent, I request that the following is implemented / maintained:

- An unimpeded route along Smith Street to ensure that the bus station can be accessed during an emergency such as heavy snow, road collapse etc. This route would need to be available at very short notice.

- All parking bays on Water Street, some of which are currently suspended, are permanently suspended to maintain an unimpeded route.’

The issue of emergency access has been considered and Article 7 of the draft order states the following:

Nothing in Article 4 will prevent buses from proceeding along the length of road
specified in Schedule 1 to this Order in situations when Rochdale Bus Station cannot be accessed via Water Street and upon the direction or with the permission of the Bus Station Manager.

If the order is confirmed, any physical changes to the road layout will not compromise such access.

The removal of the two remaining limited waiting bays on Water Street would require the introduction of a separate TRO and the bays are therefore unable to be removed as part of this particular order. An alternative to removing the bays would be to realign the centre lines adjacent to the bays. This would aid the flow of two-way traffic at this point. It has been agreed with the objectors that this will be carried out and the situation monitored. If necessary, the Council will promote a separate TRO to remove the bays.