

Report to:

**CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Relevant Officer:

Ian Large Head of Highway and Traffic Management Services

Date of meeting:

7 February 2024

**REVIEW OF THE FEEDBACK AND PROPOSED NEXT STEPS IN RELATION TO
THE CURRENT EXPERIMENTAL TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER (ETRO)
INTRODUCED IN THE ST JOHNS SQUARE AREA.**

1.0 Purpose of the report

1.1 To consider the feedback from the consultation exercise to date and to consider the option to extend the consultation and the Experimental Traffic Regulation order period to address the specific question of closing St Johns Square outside servicing hours.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 To extend the consultation period until mid-May to facilitate more in-depth engagement with stakeholders, particularly focusing on the specific question of closing St Johns Square outside of servicing hours. Closing the extended consultation period in mid-May, will enable a modification to the existing remit of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) if supported, to encompass the closure of St Johns Square outside servicing hours for the remaining period of the ETRO.

2.2 Subject to the outcome of the extended consultation to modify the existing remit of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order to exclude all traffic between the hours of 10:30 am and 6:00 pm and to continue with the ETRO for the remaining six months of the order before a decision on permanent change is made.

3.0 Reason for recommendation(s)

To effectively address the feedback generated thus far in the ongoing consultation process and provide ample time for all stakeholders to comment on this specific question related to closing St Johns Square outside loading hours.

3.1 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy approved by the Council? No

3.2 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered

4.1 To proceed with the current options and format of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order without allowing additional time for consultation on the proposal to close St Johns Square outside servicing hours.

5.0 Council priority

5.1 The relevant Council priority is:

- 'The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool'
- 'Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience'

6.0 Background and key information

6.1 The existing Experimental Traffic Regulation Order, implemented in May 2023, brought about alterations to access and usage for St Johns Square. The order restricts traffic to buses and taxis exclusively, and it governs parking and delivery hours. General traffic is prohibited at all times. From 10:30 am to 6:00 pm, St Johns Square is accessible solely to bus traffic and taxis, while deliveries are permitted outside of this timeframe from 6:00 pm to 10:30 am.

6.2 Feedback received so far has been predominantly positive and favours change. The reduction in traffic is perceived as creating a more inviting space for pedestrians, enhancing safety, and contributing to a more pleasant experience for those travelling through and utilising the Square. This sentiment is echoed in comments received from both residents and businesses in the town centre area.

6.3 Whilst physically closing access was not a specific question, several pivotal town centre businesses, communicated through the Business Improvement District (BID), and have expressed a collective desire to completely close St Johns Square to all traffic outside servicing hours. The proposal includes the closure of the gates and the elimination of all traffic from 10:30 am to 6:00 pm, which they feel will support an increase in footfall and a safer and more inviting atmosphere for users.

6.4 Focused engagement efforts have been undertaken with low-vision groups, including a visit and walk of the area to facilitate open dialogue. This interaction allowed insights into how St Johns Square is utilised and their experiences of accessing the area. Importantly, these groups also endorse the principle of a complete closure and removing all traffic from St Johns Square.

6.5 Extending the consultation and focusing on the specific question of closing the gates and removing all traffic will allow this key question, raised from the consultation so far to be thoroughly and robustly aired with all stakeholders,

6.6 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of appendices

7.1 Appendix 10(a) - Indicative Area Plan

8.0 Financial considerations

8.1 The Experimental Traffic Regulation Order and associated costs will be funded by Highway and Traffic Management Services.

9.0 Legal considerations

9.1 An Experimental Traffic Regulation Order is made under Sections 9 and 10 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

10.0 Risk management considerations

10.1 The use of the St Johns Square area if change is not introduced, will remain difficult to manage and control. Access and parking will remain as they currently are, this will see the current unacceptable levels of traffic, disruption and uncertainty for users continue.

11.0 Equalities considerations and the impact of this decision for our children and young people:

11.1 Representations from low vision groups, the general public and drivers will continue to be made in terms of the St Johns Square area in relation to traffic, parking and safety.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations

12.1 Limiting traffic, the speed of traffic and the volume of traffic will yield some benefits, the introduction of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order will also support the use of public transport.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken

13.1 The details of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order will be shared with key stakeholders. A comprehensive communication programme will be used to inform all. An Experimental Traffic Regulation Order is a legal document that imposes traffic and parking restrictions to test their effectiveness while they are evaluated. Formal objections can be made within period of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order

14.0 Background papers

14.1 Sections 9 and 10 of the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984.