Cheltenham Borough Council is continually striving to improve the quality of life in the town and increase its economic prosperity. Part of this vision involves making a number of changes to the road network in the town centre, known as the Cheltenham Transport Plan. If implemented, these proposals will help bring a number of benefits to the town.

The council has been working with Gloucestershire County Council to develop the existing Cheltenham Transport Plan, and we now need the public’s views. Once the public have expressed their opinions and the results have been analysed, the councils will decide if any changes are needed, before agreeing a final version of the plan.

The final plan will be subject to a formal traffic order consultation before a decision by the county council, who are responsible for the town’s roads, probably in the autumn of 2013.
How did we get here?

When we asked five years ago, people supported the idea of removing traffic from Boots Corner and improving the space freed up for better use.

Since then, the councils have been considering how to manage town centre traffic and where to find the money to make the changes so this can happen.

The funds are now available – through Government grants and the sale of council land – and work on the project has moved to the next level of detail, which is presented here.

Cheltenham’s traffic system has evolved over the years - often in the past leading to the loss of attractive and historic buildings and spaces.

The proposals given here do not need new road building, so no more of the town’s buildings or spaces will be lost. In fact the scheme gives space back to pedestrians and cyclists – who can make better use of a street pattern ideal for walking and cycling – whilst helping bus traffic.

Background

The Cheltenham Transport Plan is moving forward with ideas which the borough and the county council have been working on since 2000.

In 2006 Halcrow were appointed to further develop the Civic Pride proposals based on Latham’s earlier work. These proposals included a public consultation in June 2007 that showed broad support for a range of ideas to alter the traffic system.

Following this, in 2008, the proposals for town centre regeneration and traffic management were formally adopted by the borough council in a plan for the town centre known as the Civic Pride Urban Design Framework.

The ideas for changes to the roads in the town centre contained in the framework form the basis of the traffic proposals presented here in the Cheltenham Transport Plan.

In 2012 Gloucestershire County Council was awarded funding from the government to carry out these changes to the roads in the town centre and a range of measures to reduce the impact of traffic in Cheltenham.

This funding from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) is allocated to projects that will boost economic prosperity whilst cutting traffic congestion and improving air quality. In addition to this, Cheltenham Borough Council will be using money from the sale of some of its land to further improve the streets in the town centre including new paving and street furniture.

The principal aim of the proposals is to better manage traffic in the town centre to enable the town centre environment to be improved which will in turn help to bolster the town’s economy. The proposals will create improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and people using public transport whilst also making it easier for drivers to access car parks.

Air quality in Cheltenham

Air quality monitoring has identified several locations in Cheltenham where nitrogen dioxide limits are being exceeded. Therefore an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) has been declared to cover the whole of Cheltenham Borough and an action plan is being developed to address the problem areas.

The action plan will address the issue of air quality by assisting with the following measures:
- incorporating air quality requirements into new development planning policy.
- encouraging a low emission bus fleet.
- reducing urban speed limits to 20mph.
- promoting sustainable transport to parents on the school run.
- cheaper parking for low emission vehicles.
- variable message signing alerting drivers of car park spaces and route congestion.
- a dedicated air quality website.
- residents’ parking and car pool schemes.
- more efficient traffic signals.

Traffic modelling has predicted that future traffic growth will lead to more congestion and higher pollution levels. Given that vehicle pollution levels already need to be lowered the inevitable conclusion is that to “do nothing” is not sustainable.

The Air Quality Management Area designated by Cheltenham Borough Council in 2011 is shown on the map.

Further information on Cheltenham Borough Council’s Air Quality Action Plan proposals can be obtained from pollution@cheltenhm.gov.uk.
How can traffic be reduced in Cheltenham?

We will:

• Encourage people not to use their vehicles for unnecessary journeys, particularly short ones – evidence shows this to be a key change. Improved signage and routing for cyclists and pedestrians in the town will influence this.

• Remove through-traffic from the town centre by encouraging more deliveries to be made outside of normal shopping hours.

• Maintain access to the town centre for buses – more people use buses than cars in the town centre.

• Promote Park and Ride as an alternative to car use for accessing the town centre.

• Allow two-way movements on streets thus reducing the need to follow the clockwise one-way system – two-way traffic reduces traffic speed and cuts journey distances.

• Allow shops to be serviced - many shops only have front access.

• Create a more pleasant town centre environment – removal of through traffic will allow the opportunity to improve streets for pedestrians.

• Contribute to health improvements by encouraging walking and cycling – recent data identifies inactivity as a major UK health problem. We will offer local people help and advice to leave their car at home and try active travel.

• Protect the key features for which Cheltenham is renowned - so no new roads and no demolition work is needed.

• Remove some of the existing frustrations by enabling motorists to access car parks more easily as they arrive into the town.

• Encourage investment by creating the right conditions for shops, restaurants and other businesses to thrive.

• Offer opportunities for low carbon transport – such as electric vehicle charging points.

• Work in a number of schools across Cheltenham to encourage children and parents to cycle to school where possible.

• Promote car sharing in Cheltenham by making it easier to arrange trips online.

Economic advantages

An independent economic impact assessment was included within the LSTF bid which was subsequently approved by the Department for Transport. The economic impact assessment highlighted key outcomes for Cheltenham as follows:

• The transport proposals are expected to increase retail and leisure prosperity - research indicates that a better town centre environment leads to improved business performance.

• Limiting traffic at Boots Corner will improve pedestrian movement in the town centre. The plans have the support of developers who see the proposals as vital for attracting town centre investment.

• Commercial developments triggered by the transport plan are predicted to create 420 direct jobs and 174 indirect jobs.

• Research suggests that the local labour market can provide workers with appropriate skills and training to fill the vacancies created.

Boots Corner – the future?

The reduction in traffic through Boots Corner will help create a civic space that enhances the heart of Cheltenham. Here are four ideas for how the space could be used.

- Centrepiece sculpture developed through public consultation
- Event space linking with festival activities
- Water feature reflecting Cheltenham’s history as a spa town
- Tree planting extending the traditional boulevard treatment of the Promenade into the High Street
Proposed Junctions

In order to make the alterations to traffic flow some of the junctions in the area will need to be changed.

Below are some examples of how this may be achieved.
As a general theme we have attempted to increase the ease of traffic movement by:

- Removing unnecessary traffic signals.
- Maintaining access to the town centre for buses.
- Altering the one way system to provide better access to car parks.
- Improving safety for pedestrians.
- Providing more direct access to the town centre for cycles.

#### Albion Street/Pittville Street (Junction 03)

- New signal poles and associated equipment to be installed.
- New footway/concarriage to be installed.
- Removal of cycle markings - dropped kerb area to keep.
- Existing traffic island to be removed.

#### St John's Avenue/Albion Street (Junction 04)

- New crossing facility to be relocated and converted to a puffin crossing.
- Existing traffic island to be removed.
- New signal poles and associated equipment to be installed.

#### Oriel Road/Rodney Road (Junction 13)

- Existing crossing facility to be relocated.
- New double yellow lines to be added.
- Removal of cycle markings - dropped kerb area to keep.
- Existing vegetated area to be cut back.

#### Bath Road/Oriel Road (Junction 12)

- New double yellow lines to be added.
- Existing crossing facility to be converted to a puffin crossing.
- New corduroy paving to be installed.
Vehicle Modelling

Traffic levels in Cheltenham are predicted to increase in the future as a result of expected growth in the local economy.

Gloucestershire County Council has used state-of-the-art traffic modelling to test the impact of the proposals put forward in the Cheltenham Transport Plan. The modelling methodology included within the LSTF bid is accepted by the Department for Transport as a reliable tool for this purpose. Whilst it is not suggested that traffic modelling is always 100% accurate, it has however proved to be reliable for other projects of a similar nature.

On these pages are two plans which show the effect of the Cheltenham Transport Plan proposals on traffic flow on key town centre routes.

The figures compare:

- Traffic volumes from 2010
- Predicted traffic volumes in 2026 with the current road layout and
- Predicted traffic volumes in 2026 with the proposed road layout and the supporting LSTF measures.

The year 2026 was chosen as it is 10 years after the proposed changes are completed and so demonstrates that the package of measures will still be effective well into the future.

The diagrams show the number of vehicles per hour during the morning and evening peak period when traffic volume is at its greatest.
Your questions answered

1 Why is this Cheltenham Transport Plan necessary?
This scheme is part of a wider range of actions aimed at securing central Cheltenham’s economic wellbeing, whilst also intervening to prevent increasing levels of congestion and health threatening air pollution.

2 Who will be allowed to use Clarence St, Pittville St and the route through Boots Corner?
Access to the western High Street area has been restricted to buses only, between 10am and 6pm, and to delivery vehicles outside these hours. This has worked, and it is our intention to apply this restriction but also allow taxis (hackney carriages) after 6pm and before 10am in the vicinity of Boots Corner. Access will be available to pedestrians and cyclists at all times.

3 But hasn’t the recession resulted in fewer vehicles and less vehicle miles?
Yes, this is true, people are seeking cheaper ways to travel, however the long term trend for the last few decades has seen more vehicles on our roads. In the 2011 census 25% of people were either walking or cycling to work in Cheltenham. This plan will encourage further changes by promoting walking, cycling and public transport, and reducing reliance on cars.

4 How reliable are the predictions being made?
Gloucestershire County Council has used state-of-the-art traffic modelling to test the impact of the proposals. Whilst these are still predictions, they provide essential evidence to support decision making. If the plan goes ahead, traffic surveys will be carried out to monitor the changes to traffic.

5 What happens to the traffic lights?
The plan proposes that several sets of traffic lights will be removed where they are considered to be unnecessary, due to predicted changes to traffic levels.

6 What can be done if the changes cause higher levels of traffic in some areas than were predicted?
Whilst the modelling does predict changes to traffic on some routes, traffic will be monitored across the town after the improvements are made. If unexpected impacts are found, further changes will be considered as appropriate to improve the way the scheme works.

7 What will happen at Boots Corner?
Boots Corner will become a pedestrian space through which buses and cycles may pass – the same as has been happening between Primark and Tesco on the High Street for many years. Taxis and delivery vehicles will also have access after 6pm and before 10am. The removal of other traffic will create an opportunity to provide a civic space that enhances the heart of Cheltenham.

8 Have the proposed changes been considered on safety grounds?
All the proposed road network changes have been subject to road safety audits. As the designs are developed, further checks will be made, including a review once the plan is introduced. All improvements will be monitored for a period after completion to assess their safety and identify any improvements necessary.

9 Where will the traffic unable to travel through Boots Corner go?
Traffic counts show that vehicles use a variety of routes through the town, depending on their start and finish points. After the plan is introduced, new opportunities to access the town centre will be created by re-instating two-way traffic on some streets. Some traffic will find alternative routes to avoid the town centre and some people will choose to walk, cycle and use public transport more. The traffic modelling predicts that, whilst some roads are likely to see an increase in use, others will see a decrease.

10 What is LSTF?
LSTF stands for Local Sustainable Transport Fund. It is the name of a fund managed by the Department for Transport. The county council made a successful application in 2012 and this will enable the proposed Cheltenham Transport Plan to be implemented. The project is primarily aimed at supporting economic growth whilst reducing carbon emissions from travel.

11 What is AQMA?
AQMA stands for Air Quality Management Area. It is effectively an air quality action zone where improvements in air quality must be implemented. Cheltenham Borough Council have designated the whole of the borough as an AQMA.

How to get in touch
If you require any further information on the Cheltenham Transport Plan then please visit our website
• www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/cheltenhamtp
or you can contact us by:
• E-mail: cheltenhamtp@gloucestershire.gov.uk
• Telephone: 08000 514 514