

Colchester High Street/Lewis Gardens Prohibition of U-Turn

Forward Plan reference number: FP/577/11/19

Report title: High Street, Colchester (Lewis Gardens) U-turn restriction	
Report to: Cllr Kevin Bentley Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure	
Report author: Andrew Cook, Director, Highways and Transportation	
Date: 10 January 2020	For: Decision
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County Divisions affected: Abbey	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report asks the Cabinet Member to agree to make a traffic regulation order to prevent traffic travelling along Colchester High Street in either direction to make a u-turn within 60 metres of the junction with Lewis Gardens, notwithstanding that an objection has been received.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Agree to make a traffic order to prohibit U turns on the High St in Colchester in the vicinity of Lewis Gardens as advertised.

3. Summary of issue

- 3.1 There is a problem of vehicles making u turns on Colchester High St near its junction with Lewis Gardens. This has caused four personal injury accidents in recent years. There is a bus lane at the junction of Queen St and High St which means that eastbound traffic cannot enter Queen St and westbound traffic must turn left into Queen St. Some eastbound vehicles are seeking to access Queen St by making a u-turn on the High St.
- 3.2 Wy have carried out engineering measures have already been carried out to restrict turning at the junction itself, however motorists are continuing to carry out the U-turns by causing their vehicles to mount the footway. This is occurring at either side of the junction.
- 3.3 Accordingly the Council has consulted on a proposal to make a traffic regulation order to make it an offence to make a u turn within sixty metres of the junction with Lewis Gardens.
- 3.4 We have received one objection to the proposal which is set out at appendix A. This is based around an assertion that the existing bus lane between High

Street and Queen Street creates a demand for u-turns. The objector considers that removal of the bus lane would remove the demand for making u-turns and considers that the bus lane itself has few benefits.

- 3.5 However, removal of the bus lane would make the High Street a more attractive route through Colchester than the existing arrangement, and would add to congestion already present on the High Street. Maintaining the bus lane and enabling a U-turn ban would reduce the attractiveness of the route to drivers and have a knock-on effect of reducing traffic in the High St and in Queen St and therefore improving journey time reliability for buses using this link.
- 3.6 The Objector believes that the bus lane removal would eliminate the need for drivers to carry out U-turns in the vicinity of Lewis Gardens, and would also improve access for people wishing to drop children attending the St Thomas More primary school, and who do not want to use the Brook St approach. This is not feasible as Queen Street is an Air Quality Management Area and introducing an alternative route for all vehicles to reach Queen Street from the High Street will provide a disbenefit concerning air quality, and potentially expose the County Council to the risk a direction from the Government requiring it to take action to meet air quality standards.
- 3.7 The objector also suggests that reversal of the one-way system along Priory Street may also be a solution. However, this has been ruled out on safety grounds as the exit on to Queen Street is too tight for longer vehicles and goods vehicles to pass without colliding with adjacent buildings.
- 3.8 Full details of the objection are given in Appendix A.
- 3.9 There have been no objections received by any statutory consultees.
- 3.10 There has been one piece of communication from the Public giving support for the proposals. This is at Appendix B.

4. Options

- 4.1 **Option 1 - Do nothing:** Turning movements will continue to occur. The risk of collision between turning vehicles and non-motorised users remains. There is an argument that as the turning manoeuvre becomes more routine/accepted, the speeds of the turns will increase and the risk to footway users will increase. This does not work in conjunction with the Casualty reduction nature of the scheme.
- 4.2 **Option 2 - Implement a U-turn prohibition:** This will allow the Police to prosecute anyone found to be turning at this location. There is the potential that the prohibition will result in drivers finding other location to carry out U-turns, however it will also make the High Street less attractive to road users who may then seek alternative routes (Magdalen St/Brook St, or Cowdray Ave/East St). This will have a further positive impact on buses and other vehicles using the High Street (disabled badge holders, loading bays etc).

Priory Street is a local destination rather than a strategic destination, and road users wishing to get to Priory Street will likely be familiar with the highway network and will know alternative routes. **This is the preferred option.**

- 4.3 **Option 3 - Remove the bus lane:** This will open Queen Street up to traffic from both the eastbound and westbound High Street. It is expected that traffic along Queen Street would increase significantly and delays to buses and taxis would increase. It would also reduce the impact of ECC's environmental policies and commitments, as Queen Street is currently an Air Quality Management Area. The occurrence of turning vehicles at Lewis Gardens would be reduced or eliminated very quickly and the risk to pedestrians at Lewis Gardens would be significantly reduced.

5. Issues for consideration

- 5.1 This scheme is a Casualty Reduction scheme, triggered by the occurrence of four Personal Injury Accidents within 3 years. The proposals will also support any potential future pedestrianisation (or, bus access only) of the High Street.

6.1 Financial implications

- 6.1.1 The implementation of a U turn prohibition at this location will cost less than £10,000 based on the advertising and administration of the Traffic Regulation Order, and 4 x sign and post installations. The funds will come from the Colchester Town Centre Improvements scheme funds, as the U-turns are a resulting impact from the creation of the bus lane at High St/Queen St, which has a secured funding pot.

6.2 Legal implications

- 6.2.1 The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 gives the Council a statutory duty to exercise its traffic functions to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of traffic of all kinds, including pedestrians and to provide suitable and adequate parking facilities.
- 6.2.2 The U-turn prohibition requires a Traffic Regulation Order, which has been sought and advertised. There has been a single objection received, which is the subject of this Cabinet Member Action request.
- 6.2.3 The proposed prohibition aims to remove the occurrence of drivers using the footway as extra carriageway width in which to turn.
- 6.2.4 The Road Traffic Act 1988 requires the Council to take such measures as appear to the authority to be appropriate to prevent such accidents, including the dissemination of information and advice relating to the use of roads, the giving of practical training to road users or any class or description of road users, the construction, improvement, maintenance or repair of roads for the maintenance of which they are responsible and other measures taken in the

exercise of their powers for controlling, protecting or assisting the movement of traffic on roads.

6. Equality and Diversity implications

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 7.3 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report **will not** have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

7. List of appendices

Appendix A – Objection Correspondence
Appendix B – Support Correspondence
Appendix C - Turning counts for Lewis Gardens.
Appendix D - Personal Injury Accident records for this location.
Appendix E – Equality Impact Assessment

8. List of Background papers

Traffic Regulation Order documentation
Scheme Drawing

I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.	Date
Councillor Kevin Bentley, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure	05 February 2020

In consultation with:

Role	Date
Director Highways and Transportation	10 January 2020
Andrew Cook	
Essex Traffic Manager / Head of Network and Safety	10 January 2020
Liz Burr	
Head of Major Projects	14 January 2020
Erwin Deppe	
Executive Director, Finance and Technology (S151 Officer)	13 January 2020
Nicole Wood	
Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)	10 January 2020
Paul Turner	